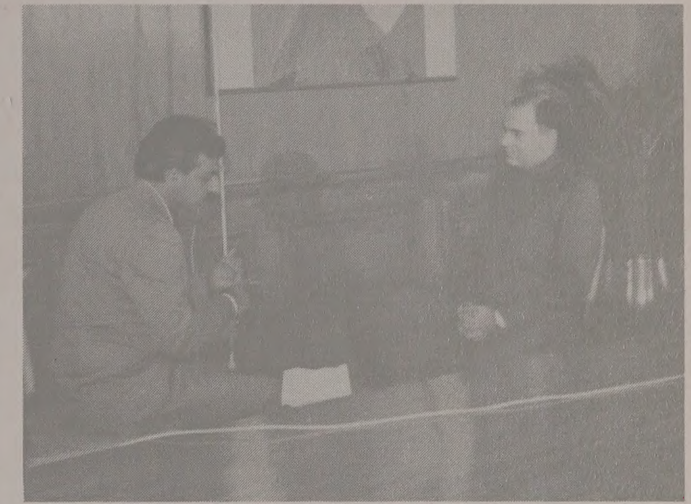
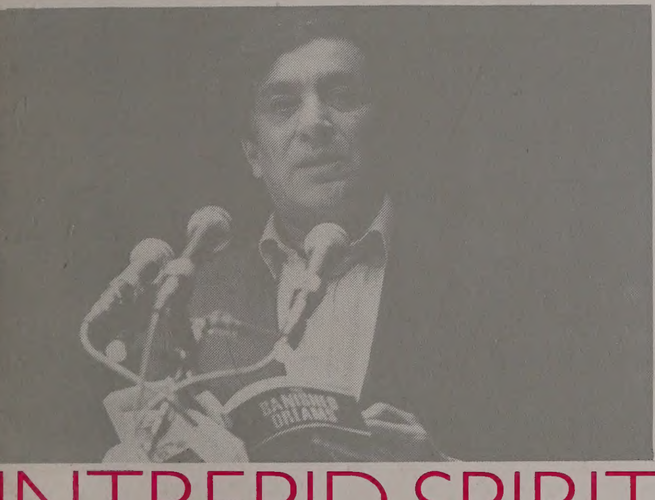
EDITED BY LINTON KWESI JOHNSON

RAJIV GANDHI AND TARIQ ALI IN CONVERSATION





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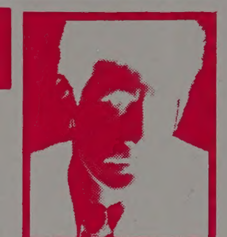

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Race Today Review 1988
Vol.18 No.2
Editor: Linton Kwesi Johnson
Sub-editor: Anna Grimshaw
Published by: Race Today Publications 165 Railton Road London SE24 OLU Tel: 01-737 2268
Advertising: MRC Marketing 01-289 8267
Photoset and Design: RT Studios Tel: 01-733 5627
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INTRODUCTION

This volume of poems, stories, interviews and reviews is not a final statement. In compiling the 1988 *Review*, we began with the preoccupation of the black and Asian populations of Britain. At root is a simple conviction: to know ourselves, we must know something of our culture.

One of the starting points in the exploration of our heritage — and this must be undertaken in conjunction with an appreciation of Shakespeare, Dickens, Brecht, Wordsworth, Marquez — is the collection of the literary produce to emerge from black and Asian communities, in this country and abroad. This concern underlies the selection of writing offered here.

The *Review* is unique. In what other setting would one find reason for throwing together extracts from the political autobiography of Tariq Ali, with the translated poems of Ahmad Faraz, with reviews of a *Qawwali* recital, of India in the Caribbean, the lyrics of Vikram Seth, Steve Biko's writings etc?

Our rationale, for bringing them under one cover, is simple. There is an industry in Britain, partly in the school multicultural curriculum, partly in the articulated policy of local authority arts funding, which champions a particular awareness of artistic or literary blackness.

Its premises are limited: there is Maya Angelou, there is Alice Walker and a few other American writers, some dub poets, some Indian classical traditions and a clutch of new playwrights with approved protesting or anti-racist voices.

The pieces in our collection, although found and published elsewhere, are not the normal staple of the multicultural syllabuses. But they are as important and they may open up new areas of exploration.

Is there uncharted territory to be discovered? Are there continents of prose and verse which lie submerged beneath prejudice or misunderstanding? In answer, one may quote from one of Latin America's most eminent poets and critics, Octavio Paz (substituting "black arts" in the places he uses "Latin American poetry"):

> I shall begin with a confession: I am certain of the existence of poems written by Latin American poets in the last fifty years, but I am not certain of the existence of Latin-American poetry. I experience the same doubt about a number of similar expressions, such as "English poetry" or "French poetry". Both the latter designate heterogeneous and at times incompatible realities: La Fontaine and Rimbaud, Dryden and Wordsworth. Apart from this general difficulty there is another, more immediate one. Although the phrase "Latin-American poetry" seems natural, it is not: it links two unknown terms. At this juncture after two millennia of aesthetic speculation from Aristotle to Heidegger, we are suffering from a sort of philosophical vertigo, and no-one knows for sure what the word poetry really means. On the level of politics and history, the same things happens with the term "Latin-America": how many of them are there — one? several? none? Maybe it is just a label that doesn't so much name as conceal a reality in a state of ebullition — something that doesn't yet have a name of its own, because it doesn't yet have an existence of its own.

In this *Review*, there is writing which moves the "black arts" closer to such a state of existence. Jatinder Verma in his essay on drama, the Natya Shastra, contends that we are in the process of evolving a non-real form. Jatinder is a practitioner and he defines the challenges his group, and others, have set themselves. But no definition from the Natya Shastra or, for that matter, from the Greater London Arts Assocation (which seems to measure "blackness" by the number of black bums on seats) will serve to dispel doubts.

The term "black" arose in Britain and it was adopted and adapted here to suit a particular political reality. Once the political definition emerged, we began to explore its cultural substantiation.

Perhaps only one or two of the writers in the collection have participated consciously in the quest for substantiation. Edward Kamau Brathwaite, whose book of poems *X/Self* is reviewed here, represents the voice of West Indian poetry (another questionable term) and, as such, is embarked on his own quest. Tariq Ali's reminisciences, inevitably, betray a more grounded political selection and direction than the simple search for the definition of "black" in Britain. Yet their writing, and that of others included, addresses aspects of our more general concern and contributes to its resolution. Despite the disparate nature of work produced by black and Asian writers in Britain, in the sub-continent, in Africa and in the West Indies, it does possess inner coherence.

The single impression this anthology may make on the reader is its diversity. For this reason it is difficult to bundle the different pieces into one critical bag, even though it is easy to put them between the same covers. Having introduced some familiar and some not so familiar voices, one thing should remain after the *Review* is read: each item, poem, statement, article, whatever, must be examined individually. Only then may the details define a broad future canvas.

MARCH 1988

RAJIV GANDHI AND TARIQ ALI
IN CONVERSATION

IN THE THREE YEARS SINCE RAJIV GANDHI TOOK OVER THE REINS OF POWER FROM HIS MOTHER, INDIA'S YOUNGEST PRIME MINISTER HAS NOT HAD A MOMENT'S RESPITE FROM THE CRISES WHICH CONTINUE TO PLAGUE HIS GOVERNMENT. BELOW HE TALKS TO TARIQ ALI ABOUT SOME OF THE PROBLEMS FACING HIS COUNTRY.

TARIQ ALI: In this fortieth year of Indian independence, what do you see as the main blocks to social advance and modernization which you declared to be your aim in moving India into the twenty- first century?

RAJIV GANDHI: If you look at just one item, it is to change the attitudes in our people, to make them more positive, perhaps a little more aggressive, a little more self-confident.

But can you do that without big social changes in the countryside which still constrains the majority?

It requires very big social changes in the countryside. It requires massive changes in the education system. We really have to get our people trained to deal with the technologies of tomorrow. And that really is the big challenge. We've, in a sense, accepted the challenge and brought about a new education policy. It's being implemented from this year. It'll take three to four years to get off the ground. But we feel it'll be the first step, the first major step in looking ahead and building a nation which can cope with the challenges of tomorrow.

And are you confident?

Oh very. Very.

Now, one of the things which strikes people like myself, who come to India time after time, is that we see outbreaks of fundamentalism of all sorts: Hindu fundamentalism and Muslim fundamentalism. The secular fabric of Indian society, which was a very vital part of this country and for which India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru fought very hard, is beginning to tear at the edges. That's the impression one gets.

Not really. What we are seeing is not just fundamentalism. It seems to be almost an outbreak of small-mindedness. It's not limited to religions. There is the Hindu fundamentalism, the Muslim fundamentalism, the Sikhs. These are the three which are really vehement at the moment. But there are others. There's regional fundamentalism, there's linguistic fundamentalism. There are areas where caste-ism is striking back in a sense. So what's happening is that people are thinking small, instead of thinking in the larger interests of the nation. Perhaps, again, it comes back to the education system. It is a loss of values because of the changes that are happening in society. It comes because the speed of economic change is not matched by spiritual and moral changes. So we have to get that together. But if you see what's really happening, the problem is that we're trying to do in a few decades what's happened in the world over a few centuries. And whenever you squeeze so much into so little time, these frictions are bound to come about. But the challenge is to keep them within limits. I'm very optimistic that it's going to be alright.

You mean this despite the fact that, according to statistics published here, there've been more people killed in communal riots over the last two years than ever before. There are also these very depressing incidents, like the self-immolation of a widow in Rajastan, which are deeply shocking.

That was terrible. Offensive. I don't think you can find words to describe that. There are these forces coming up, not only in India, all over the world, there is deep fundamentalism coming up. I feel much of the challenge is that we're going back to old values, going back to roots, materialism and a very superficial attitude is coming out. When people have problems they don't have the spiritual strength to lean on, then they sort of fall back to a fundamentalist attitude. We need a lot of work in strengthening our society to cope with the rate of change.

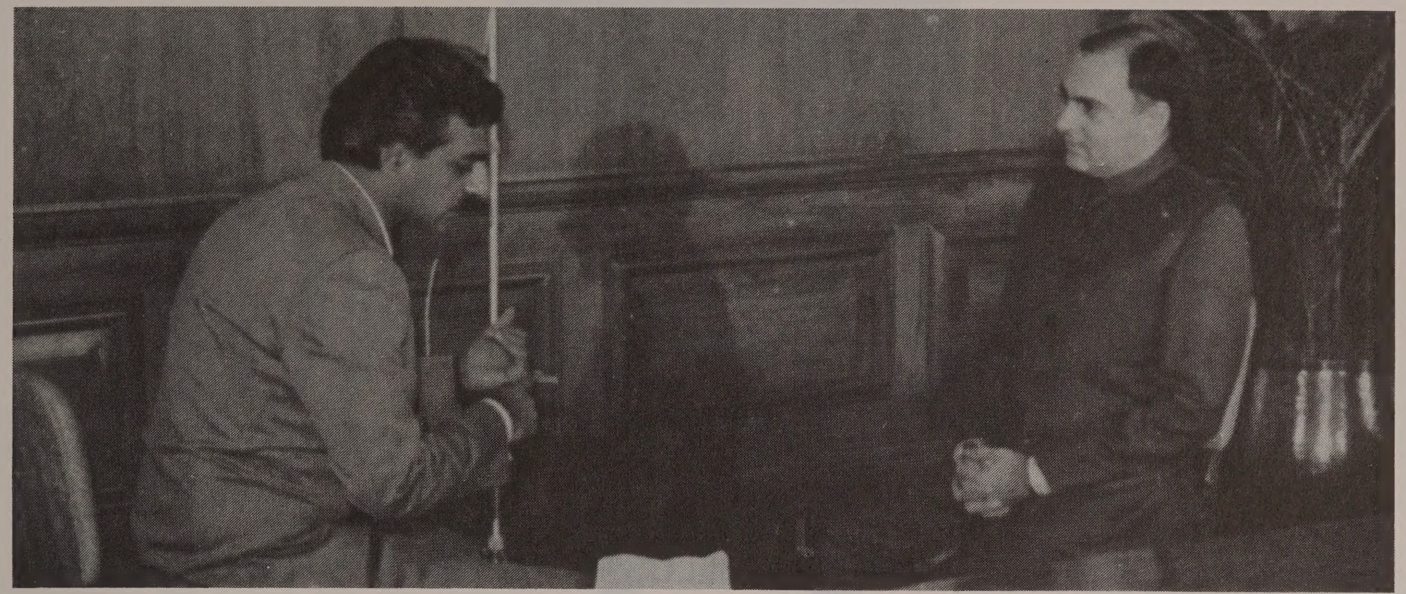
If we can move on now to your neighbour, Pakistan, whose nuclear capability has been much talked about in recent days. Where are we in that ball game?

Where are we? We're watching.

Where's the subcontinent?

We're watching. Everybody is watching with bated breath. It's very unfortunate the way Pakistan's nuclear programme has gone, and perhaps it's best to contrast it with India. If you see our nuclear programme, it is entirely in the civilian sector. It's dragged across the floor of parliament almost every session.

Our installations are open for visits from MPs, from journalists, from a wide variety of people. There are no labs or institutions which are hidden away or closeted somewhere without anybody knowing where they are. Everything is fairly open. Technology has been developed by ourselves, a bit at a time. Now if you contrast that with Pakistan, theirs is entirely in the military sector. I believe they have no installations in the civilian sector at all. Their technology, is begged, borrowed, stolen, smuggled; every devious trick has been used to get the technology. Their programme is definitely a nuclear weapon programme. There is no civilian output from that programme at all. There is no energy programme. There's nothing else except a military outlet. If you contrast this with India you'll see the difference. We, by having an open programme, have shown a capability. But for thirteen years now, we have demonstrated that in spite of that capability we have restraint. We don't have to go nuclear. We have



shown a will and shown a direction to the world. Pakistan's doing exactly the opposite. It'll be very sad if they do have a weapon or get a weapon. We believe that it is really the responsibility of their friends.

And when you were in Washington, what did their friends say?

Well, one particular friend was also very worried about the capability and the direction they're taking. And I hope that they will do what is required.

General Zia said the other day that he is prepared to sign a non-proliferation treaty if India is prepared to do the same.

There's a lot of talk about what Pakistan's prepared to do. I can list about sixteen or seventeen items that we have discussed together, that we are willing to do. But they get stuck when they have to do something.

How do you see relations with them outside the nuclear question at the present time? There have been clashes on the border.

We've had problems in Kashmir, on the glacier, just recently. We don't know why they've done that because it was silly really. We had a build-up in January (1987) which was very, very tense and we managed to pull back from that. It just shows, you know, that things can build up very quickly between the two nations. It requires a lot of effort on both sides to see that things are kept at the proper levels.

Recently, at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference, there was again a big discussion on South Africa and sanctions against South Africa. You played a prominent part in this, as India has always done. The British Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher, also played a prominent part in it. Where do you think this debate's leading and why does the Commonwealth allow itself to be vetoed by one member?

Oh, we weren't vetoed, we didn't allow ourselves to be vetoed. And if you read the communique, you'll find that many of the paragraphs have about six words saying everybody agreed to do this, except Britain. So we took a decision that we're not going to be bothered and if Britain doesn't want to come along, they needn't come along. But one mustn't see the issues in such black and white terms. What needs to be done in South Africa is, first of all, to bring pressure on the South African government to end racism, to end apartheid. Now, here, we feel the British are perhaps the most experienced in having gone through this once before. There can be no compromise with racism. What we're seeing today is, you know, small demands which sort of soften the effect of racism on the blacks, but there's no effort to end racism. And Britain's gone through this before. Before the Second World War, this debate was on in Britain when racism was coming in Germany. There was one view which said talk with them, convince them. Chamberlain put that forward. Churchill had the other view, that there can be no compromise. You've got to face it head on, and you've got to finish it. We know which one was right.

But don't you think, given the massive economic links between British industry and South Africa, what is essentially taking place is also a protection of British interests?

What you're saying is that Britain is compromising on basic principles for economic self-interest?

It has been known for nations to do this.

Yes, of course. But one would like to believe that Britain, of all nations, would not do it. And even if you look at the economic interest, there is a short term interest — the next five years, ten years or so. Then there is the long term interest. If a solution comes about in South Africa where the blacks see that Britain stood against them right through, then it'll not be in the economic interest of Britain for such a solution to have come about. Something is going to trip. It can't carry on like this for very long.

Can you see a Commonwealth without Britain, as a theoretical possibility?

Well, it hasn't come to that yet. Let's see how things develop.

India still remains firmly non-aligned. You have recently visited Washington and, not so long ago, you were in Moscow for the Festival of India. What is your personal estimate of relations between the big powers themselves, since you've met both Gorbachev and Reagan.

Well, we all know that the INF seems to be on the verge of falling through. I won't say it's completely out yet, but it seems very close to being out. We feel this will be a great disappointment to the whole world. But there is a positive side. The positive side is that three years ago, or four years ago, you couldn't have imagined the two major powers even talking in the way that they have talked. You couldn't have thought of a meeting between the two leaders. But today we're seeing that happening. We're seeing that solutions, even to the most complicated problems, appear graspable. I feel that relations have improved tremendously. There is a change of outlook in both countries, and there is a realisation that the sort of systems built up after the Second World War, can't really lead to a solution. New systems have to be found. We feel this is very positive.

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TOBA TEK SINGH

A SHORT STORY

BY SAADAT HASAN MANTO

TRANSLATED BY KHALID HASAN ILLUSTRATED BY SHARON LUCKHAM

A couple of years after the Partition of the country, it occurred to the respective governments of India and Pakistan that inmates of lunatic asylums, like prisoners, should also be exchanged. Muslim lunatics in India
should be transferred to Pakistan and Hindu and Sikh lunatics in Pakistani asylums should be sent to India.

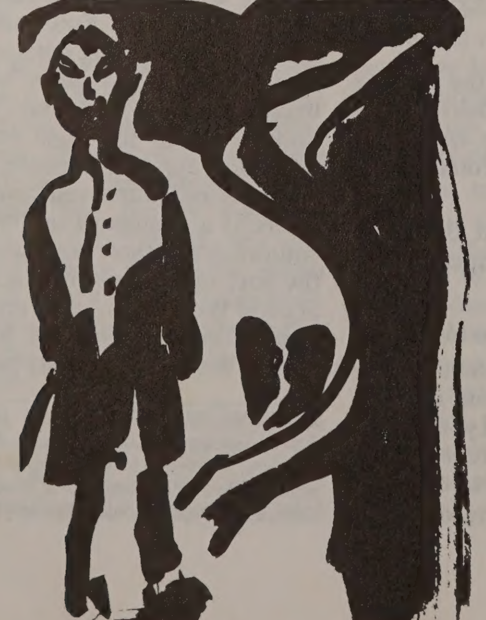
Whether this was a reasonable or an unreasonable idea is difficult to say. One thing, however, is clear. It took many conferences of important officials from the two sides to come to this decision. Final details, like the date of actual exchange, were carefully worked out. Muslim lunantics whose families were still residing in India were to be left undisturbed, the rest moved to the border for the exchange. The situation in Pakistan was slightly different, since almost the entire population of Hindus and Sikhs had already migrated to India. The question of keeping non-Muslim lunatics in Pakistan did not, therefore, arise.

While it is not known what the reaction in India was, when the news reached the Lahore lunatic asylum, it immediately became the subject of heated discussion. One Muslim lunatic, a regular reader of the fire-eating daily newspaper *Zamindar,* when asked what Pakistan was, replied after deep reflection: 'The name of a place in India where cut-throat razors are manufactured.'

This profound observation was received with visible satisfaction.

A Sikh lunatic asked another Sikh: 'Sardarji, why are we being sent to India? We don't even know the language they speak in that country.'

The man smiles: 'I know the language of the *Hindostoras.*



These devils always strut about as if they were the lords of the earth.'

One day a Muslim lunatic, while taking his bath, raised the slogan '*Pakistan Zindabad*' with such enthusiasm that he lost his footing and was later found lying on the floor unconscious.

Not all inmates were mad. Some were perfectly normal, except that they were murderers. To spare them the hangman's noose, their families had managed to get them committed after bribing officials down the line. They probably had a vague idea why India was being divided and what Pakistan was, but, as for the present situation, they were equally clueless.

Newspapers were no help either, and the asylum guards were ignorant, if not illiterate. Nor was there anything to be learnt by eavesdropping on their conversations. Some said there was this man by the name Mohamed Ali Jinnah, or the Quaid-e-Azam, who had set up a separate country for Muslims, called Pakistan.

As to where Pakistan was located, the inmates knew nothing. That was why both the mad and the partially mad were unable to decide whether they were now in India or in Pakistan. If they were in India, where on earth was Pakistan? And if they were in Pakistan, then how come that until only the other day it was India?

One inmate had got so badly caught up in this India-Pakistan-Pakistan-India rigmarole that one day , while sweeping the floor, he dropped everything, climbed the nearest tree and installed himself on a branch, from which vantage point he spoke for two hours on the delicate problem of India and Pakistan. The guards asked him to get down; instead he went a branch higher, and when threatened with punishment, declared: 'I wish to live neither in India nor Pakistan. I wish to live in this tree.'

When he was finally persuaded to come down, he began embracing his Sikh and Hindu friends, tears running down his cheeks, fully convinced that they were about to leave him and go to India.

A Muslim radio engineer, who had an M.Sc. degree, and never mixed with anyone, given as he was to taking long walks by himself all day, was so affected by the current debate that one day he took all his clothes off, gave the bundle to one of the attendants and ran into the garden stark naked.

A Muslim lunatic from Chaniot, who used to be one of the most devoted workers of the All India Muslim League, and obsessed with bathing himself fifteen or sixteen times a day, had suddenly stopped doing that and announced — his name was Mohamed Ali — that he was Quaid-e-Azam Mohamed

Ali Jinnah. This had led a Sikh inmate to declare himself Master Tara Singh, the leader of the Sikhs. Apprehending serious communal trouble, the authorities declared them dangerous, and shut them up in separate cells.

There was a young Hindu lawyer from Lahore who had gone off his head after an unhappy love affair. When told that Amritsar was to become a part of India, he went into a depression because his beloved lived in Amritsar, something he had not forgotten even in his madness. That day he abused every major and minor Hindu and Muslim leader who had cut India into two, turning his beloved into an Indian and him into a Pakistani.

When news of the exchange reached the asylum, his friends offered him congratulations, because he was now to be sent to India, the country of his beloved. However, he declared that he had no intention of leaving Lahore because his practice would not flourish in Amritsar.

There were two Anglo-Indian lunatics in the European ward. When told that the British had decided to go home after granting independence to India, they went into a state of deep shock and were seen conferring with each other in whispers the entire afternoon. They were worried about their changed status after independence. Would there be a European ward or would it be abolished? Would breakfast continue to be served or would they have to subsist on bloody Indian chapati?

There was another inmate, a Sikh, who had been confined for the last fifteen years. Whenever he spoke, it was the same mysterious gibberish: *'Uper the gur gur the annexe the bay dhayana the mung the dal of the laltain.'* Guards said he had not slept a wink in fifteen years. Occasionally, he could be observed leaning against a wall, but the rest of the time, he was always to be found standing. Because of this, his legs were permanently swollen, something that did not appear to bother him. Recently, he had started to listen carefully to discussions about the forthcoming exchange of Indian and Pakistani lunatics. When asked his opinion, he observed solemnly: *'Uper the gur gur the annexe the bay dhayana the mung the dal of the Goverment of Pakistan.'*

Of late, however, the Government of Pakistan had been replaced by the Government of Toba Tek Singh, a small town in the Punjab which was his home. He had also begun enquiring where Toba Tek Singh was to go. However, nobody was quite sure whether it was in India or Pakistan.

Those who had tried to solve this mystery had become utterly confused when told that Sialkot, which used to be in India, was now in Pakistan. It was anybody's guess what was going to happen in Lahore, which was currently in Pakistan, but could slide into India any moment. It was also possible that the entire subcontinent of India might become Pakistan. And who could say if both India and Pakistan might not entirely vanish from the map of the world one day?

The old man's hair was almost gone and what little was left had become a part of the beard, giving him a strange, even frightening, appearance. However, he was a harmless fellow and had never been known to get into fights. Older attendants at the asylum said that he was a fairly prosperous landlord from Toba Tek Singh, who had quite suddenly gone mad. His family had brought him in, bound and fettered. That was fifteen years ago.

Once a month, he used to have visitors, but since the start of communal troubles in the Punjab, they had stopped coming. His real name was Bishan Singh, but everybody called him Toba Tek Singh. He lived in a kind of limbo, having no idea what day of the week it was, or month, or how many years had passed since his confinement. However, he had developed a sixth sense about the day of the visit, when he used to bathe himself, soap his body, oil and comb his hair and put on clean clothes. He never said a word during these meetings, except occasional outbursts of *'Uper the gur gur the annexe the bay dhayana the mung the dal of the laltain.'*

When he was first confined, he had left an infant daughter behind, now a pretty young girl of fifteen. She would come occasionally, and sit in front of him with tears rolling down her cheeks. In the strange world that he inhabited, hers was just another face.

Since the start of this India-Pakistan caboodle, he got into the habit of asking fellow inmates where exactly Toba Tek Singh was, without receiving a satisfactory answer, because nobody knew. The visits had also suddenly stopped. He was increasingly restless, but, more than that, curious. The sixth sense, which used to alert him to the day of the visit, had also atrophied.

He missed his family, the gifts they used to bring and the concern with which they used to speak to him. He was sure they would have told him whether Toba Tek Singh was in India or Pakistan. He also had a feeling that they came from Toba Tek Singh, where he used to have his home.

One of the inmates had declared himself God. Bishan Singh asked him one day if Toba Tek Singh was in India or Pakistan. The man chuckled: 'Neither in India nor in Pakistan, because, so far, we have issued no orders in this respect.'

Bishan Singh begged 'God' to issue the necessary orders, so that his problem could be solved, but he was disappointed, as 'God' appeared to be preoccupied with more pressing matters. Finally, he told him angrily: *'Uper the gur*

gur the annexe the mug the dal of Guruji da Khalsa and Guruji ki fateh. . . jo boley so nihal sat sri akal.'

What he wanted to say was: 'You don't answer my prayers because you are a Muslim God. Had you been a Sikh God, you would have been more of a sport.'

A few days before the exchange was to take place, one of Bishan Singh's Muslim friends from Toba Tek Singh came to see him — the first time in fifteen years. Bishan Singh looked at him once and turned away, until a guard said to him: 'This is your old friend Fazal Din. He has come all the way to meet you.'

Bishan Singh looked at Fazal Din and began to mumble something. Fazal Din placed his hand on his friend's shoulder and said: 'I have been meaning to come for some time to bring you news. All your family is well and has gone to India safely. I did what I could to help. Your daughter Roop Kaur. . .' — he hesitated — 'She is safe too. . . in India.'

Bishan Singh kept quiet. Fazal Din continued: 'Your family wanted me to make sure you were well. Soon you will be moving to India. What can I say, except that you should remember me to bhai Balbir Singh, bhai Vadhawa Singh and bahain Amrit Kaur. Tell bhai Bibir Singh that Fazal Din is well by the grace of God. The two brown buffaloes he left behind are well too. Both of them gave birth to calves, but, unfortunately, one of them died after six days. Say I think of them often and to write to me if there is anything I can do.'

Then he added: 'Here, I brought you some rice crispies from home.'

Bishan Singh took the gift and handed it to one of the guards. 'Where is Toba Tek Singh?' he asked.

'Where? Why, it is where it has always been.'

'In India or in Pakistan?'

'In India. . . no, Pakistan.'

Without saying another word, Bishan Singh walked away, murmuring: *'Uper the gur gur the annexe the be dhyana the mung the dal of the Pakistan and Hindustan dur fittey moun.'*

Meanwhile, exchange arrangements were rapidly getting finalized. Lists of lunatics from the two sides had been exchanged between the governments, and the date of transfer fixed.

On a cold winter evening, buses full of Hindu and Sikh lunatics, accompanied by armed police and officials, began moving out of the Lahore asylum towards Wagha, the dividing line between India and Pakistan. Senior officials from the two sides in charge of exchange arrangements met, signed documents and the transfer got under way.

It was quite a job getting the men out of the buses and handing them over to officials. Some just refused to leave. Those who were persuaded to do so began to run pell-mell in every direction. Some were stark naked. All efforts to get them to cover themselves had failed because they couldn't be kept from tearing off their garments. Some were shouting abuse or singing. Others were weeping bitterly. Many fights broke out.

In short, complete confusion prevailed. Female lunatics were also being exchanged and they were even noisier. It was bitterly cold.

Most of the inmates appeared to be dead set against the entire operation. They simply could not understand why they were being forcibly removed, thrown into buses and driven to this strange place. There were slogans of *'Pakistan Zindabad'* and *'Pakistan Murdabad'*, followed by fighting.

When Bishan Singh was brought out and asked to give his name so that it could be recorded in a register, he asked the official behind the desk: 'Where is Toba Tek Singh? In India or Pakistan?'

'Pakistan,' he answered with a vulgar laugh.

Bishan Singh tried to run, but was overpowered by the Pakistani guards who tried to push him across the dividing line towards India. However, he wouldn't move. 'This is Toba Tek Singh,' he announced. *'Uper the gur gur the annexe the be dhyana mung the dal of Toba Tek Singh and Pakistan.'*

Many efforts were made to explain to him that Toba Tek Singh had already been moved to India, or would be moved immediately, but it had no effect on Bishan Singh. The guards even tried force, but soon gave up.

There he stood in no man's land on his swollen legs like a colossus.

Since he was a harmless old man, no further attempt was made to push him into India. He was allowed to stand where he wanted, while the exchange continued. The night wore on.

Just before sunrise, Bishan Singh, the man who had stood on his legs for fifteen years, screamed and as officials from the two sides rushed towards him, he collapsed to the ground.

There, behind barbed wire, on one side, lay India and behind more barbed wire, on the other side, lay Pakistan. In between, on a bit of earth which had no name, lay Toba Tek Singh.

SAADAT HASAN MANTO was born in Sambrala in 1912. He died in Lahore, Pakistan in 1955. He worked as a journalist, screen-writer, playwright, essayist and short story writer. A collection of his stories, *Kingdom End*, was published in 1987 by Verso.

AHMAD FARAZ

Mercenaries

For so long I sang your praises
but now I'm ashamed of my songs,
disturbed by the fame of my poems,
ashamed of the way I used my craft.
With guilt I look at imprisoned friends,
with shame I look at those I love.

Whenever on my beloved soil swooped
an enemy or the shadow of oppression,
whenever murderers came to attack,
whenever aggressors crossed the border
I gave whatever I had,
blood and my craft to serve you.

With tears we said goodbye to you
when battle called you away;
little hope was there of victory, though
even in defeat we never let you out of our hearts.
You sold your dignity to preserve your life;
still we tolerated your treachery.

The oppressed of the East were ours too,
whose blood you wiped on your face.
Did you really go to crush revolt
or did you go to plunder and rape?
How could you change their fate? —
You were too busy trying to wipe them out!

Whatever the outcome, let's say
the night of troubled dreams was over.
With such vanity you went there,
with such humiliation you left, for prison!
You went with pomp and splendour of arms,
with chains around your necks you left.

Still I said you were not to blame,
just to please the people of the city.
Though my poems were no balm for your wounds
still, just to comfort the helpless,
for my lost landscape
for my hopeless, sad people, I sang.

You may remember too those days
when from prison you returned.
Broken-hearted we lined the streets,
tears in our eyes,
forgetting the bitterness of our humiliation
we showered you with flowers of pride.

Little did we know that you, the defeated
would come to lick our open wounds,
that you who knew the taste of blood
would break all bounds of cruelty,
that after the killing in Bengal
you'd come and slaughter in Bolan.

Why have you put up gallows
in Frontier, in Punjab and Mehran?
Heroes!
Why and for whom this butchery,
before whom are you humble, heroes!
Which tyrant has ordered you to this,
for whom, heroes! do you shed this blood?

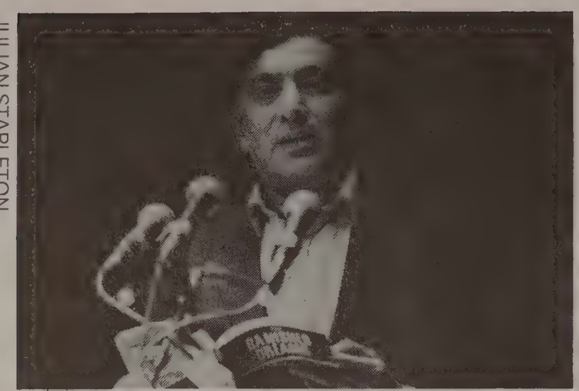
Little did I know that you would bring
such dark night on our land.
Yesterday you waved the flag of tyranny
and today you crawl in the tyrant's court.
For one dictator's sake you hold a sword
against so many necks.

Like the Gurkhas under the British,
brutal and bestial,
like the white mercenaries in Vietnam
who also accused the freedom fighters, —
You are no different; they too had
rifles, uniforms, names.

You have seen the processions of people,
banners of revolt in their hands.
The drying blood on the pavements
signifies that judgement day is near.
Yesterday we had only love for you
but today the flames of hate are rising in our hearts.

Today even the poet must perform his duty;
in the pen there's blood, not ink.
When your mask came off, then we knew
that you are not soldiers, but hired killers.
It's no longer just the tyrant's head we want,
we demand the blood of all collaborators!

JULIAN STAPLETON



INTREPID SPIRIT

AHMAD FARAZ IN CONVERSATION WITH MAHMOOD JAMAL

AHMAD FARAZ is one of the leading Urdu poets of today. He came to prominence in the early sixties as a writer of *ghazal* (love lyrics), but soon developed as a writer of modern verse. Born in Kohat, Pakistan in 1936, he rose to acquire great popularity amongst poetry-lovers and the general public through radio and television. His poems were sung by leading singers including such great names as Mehdi Hasan, Raushan Ara Begum, Noor Jehan and Iqbal Bano. While he was Director of the Academy of Letters of Pakistan in 1977, he was charged with sedition for writing a poem called 'Mercenaries'. It was a poem against army actions in Pakistan. In 1982 he was forced into exile and was based in London until 1986. He returned to Pakistan after martial law was lifted. During his exile he published several books, notably *Be Awaz Gali Koochon Men* (In Silent Streets and By-ways). He also attended many *Mushairas* (poetry readings) in Britain, America, Canada, UAE and Sweden. His poems have been translated into English and a volume, *Banished Dreams*, was published in London during 1984/85.

MAHMOOD JAMAL: Why were you exiled from Pakistan?

AHMAD FARAZ: I had no intention of leaving Pakistan, but the harassment I experienced forced me to come to Britain. Earlier, in 1977, I had been to jail after writing a poem against the army while I was Director of the Academy of Letters. I had remained undeterred. I thought I'd stick it out. But the last straw was in 1982. I returned from a mushaira in Karachi to my hotel at night. I was shocked to see the police waiting for me there. They served me with an internment notice which forbade me from entering or residing in Sind Province. This notice made me feel that things were closing in around me. Not only around me, but around all those who sought justice and freedom. That was the moment I decided to leave Pakistan and come to Britain. It was impossible for me to live quietly in Pakistan. The conditions were intolerable.

Were you served with the notice simply because you read a few poems?

Yes, but in Pakistan that's no simple matter. Apart from the poems which were aimed at the military rulers, there were ones which included opposition to politicians like Mrs Bhutto and Miraj Mohammed Khan etc.

Were you a member of an opposition party?

I was with every party that wanted democracy in Pakistan.

Which poem was it that caused such a furore?

I read for two hours, but the poem I think which caused the most disturbance was *Muhasra* "The Siege". It is too long to quote, but here are a few lines:

My pen is not that cynical guardian
Who is proud to lay siege to his own city
My pen is not the begging bowl of that poet
Who praises tyrants with his verses
My pen is the property of the people
My pen is the trial of my conscience
That is why I write with such passion
That is why I am supple as a bow as sharp as an arrow.

Unlike other people, you have been to jail purely for writing poetry, not for any political action you committed?

That's true. I first went to jail in 1977 for 'Mercenaries', which was an anti-military poem.

It was not published.

Yes, but it circulated in thousands. A few people got hold of copies and then it just spread.

Did you recite it publicly?

I just read it to friends.

How did the authorities know it was your poem, when the copies circulated did not bear your name nor were they in your own hand-writing?

That's a long story. I was the Director of the Academy of Letters. The poem was written in response to a brutal killing of five students in Punjab by the army, but I kept the poem to myself for a few days. I was invited to a friend's place, a well-established writer and bureaucrat, for tea. When I went there, he asked the usual question: 'Written anything lately?' I said, 'Yes I have'. In the meantime a mutual friend, an army colonel, rang up for some other business. I said to him: 'Come along to my office. I have something special for you people. He later came to my office with another colonel friend and enquired what special thing I had for him. I recited the poem. Both were writers as well. They asked for copies. I made a couple and gave it to them. The next thing I knew was that it had spread in the army. I was charged with sedition and arrested. I think they gathered that I was the writer from the style and content. The civil courts were still powerful then. A writ was filed at the High Court and I was released. I was then court-martialled. That was in 1977. My next brush with the army came in 1982 in Karachi. I left for Britain and remained there until 1986.

You were well-known for your *ghazal* writing. How was it that you became such a political poet?

People tend to forget that, in my first

volume of poetry, I had a poem called "Poet" which was my poetic manifesto. People who just read my *ghazals* and said that I was a romantic poet, were wrong. They did not read my verses. I have always stuck to that manifesto in which I stated clearly that a poet is not just there to write ornamental verse — *Zulf* (tresses), *Parwana* (moth), *Jam* (wine). Poets must talk of human suffering and social conditions too. I was aware, even then, that social justice did not exist in our country. Also, when the Progressive Writers' Movement started, I was an active member and Secretary for the Frontier Province. I joined the Cultural Unity Council for which I was harassed by the establishment.

When did you first come to prominence as a poet?

You will be surprised to know that my first book *Tanha Tanha* (Alone) was published when I was a college student in 1958/59. Then, after nearly a decade, my next book *Dard Ashab* (The Pain of Existence) was published. I received the Adamjee Award, our main literary award, in 1966 for this book.

Which poets were your main influences?

There were three or four people I respected, who influenced me: Ahmad Nadeem Qassmi, NM Rashed and Faiz Ahmed Faiz. It is amazing that I met Faiz Sahib much later in my career. I even wrote poems in response to his, before ever meeting him.

Would you place yourself in the tradition of Faiz Ahmed Faiz rather than Rashed?

I won't say I am in any one tradition. I am part of Urdu poetry. I go further in my own direction as years pass.

As the years passed, you had to face more than just literary critics?

I became a political target in 1977, though my poems had already been acknowledged by many. The main thing is that if one has conviction, then one does not care for the consequences. That's what happened to me. I persevered in spite of everything. I was convinced because I was speaking the truth, that one day in spite of disappointments, I would come through.

There must have been good and bad moments. Are they reflected in your work?

Yes. My poem *Fasli Raigan* (Wasted Harvest) has echoes of despair, rather than defiance. There were a few like *Goongi Koelen* (Dumb Nightingales) which talk of compromise and defeat. This poem was meant to be satirical rather than surrendering, but nonetheless I felt very down then. As oppression increased, so did my defiance. *Be Awaz Gali Koochon Men,* published in London in 1982, is my most political and defiant volume to date. It was also pirated and distributed in Pakistan while I was in exile.

What made you write such poetry?

To friends and critics who say: 'You were such a popular romantic poet. Everyone liked you. What is this?' my response is, 'You should not expect cream to come out when you pour boiling water into a pot'. The poet receives all sorts of pain, dirt and sorrow from the environment in which he lives and breathes. These are reflected in his work. Whatever I feel, I express. Individuals are nothing until they become part of a society, but an individual must act. Everyone expects others to act and the result is nothing is done.

What effects have harsh conditions in Pakistan had on our poets and writers?

I believe the effects have been bad. In the ten years of military rule the worst thing has been the selling-out by our writers. There may be many reasons for this. They are often poor, they can be easily bought off or become narrow in their focus.

You seem not to distinguish between politics and poetry?

Life is a whole. These writers become one-dimensional. Even if you are not political and write love poems, you must be honest. The problem with some of our writers is that their range is so small that even their love expression is borrowed. They may never have experienced love themselves. Their work sounds hollow. Poetry dies this way. As I said in my poem:

Love is a personal experience for everyone
You cannot depend on Farhad or Majnoon to guide you.

Their experience is limited and incomplete. Then, of course, they are scared, frightened: 'If you do this you will be sacked', 'If you do that, the radio will ban you'. How can they write when their minds are not allowed to be free? There are several writers who publicly disown their relationships with progressive writers because of fear. They leave all the hard work to someone else. However, there are a few hopeful signs. Some young poets are brave and write well. They have remained committed to truth:

Every night brings stars with it.

I am not totally disillusioned.

You continued to speak from exile. Exile must also bring some benefits?

It opens vistas. For poetry, it opens doors. You can no longer limit yourself to your locality or even your country. You have to go beyond boundaries. The experiences I have had in Africa, America and Europe have given me new subjects, broader horizons. If I had not left, I would have become a dumb nightingale and put my poems quietly in a pitcher.

Let me come for a moment to the language you use. It can be described as traditional?

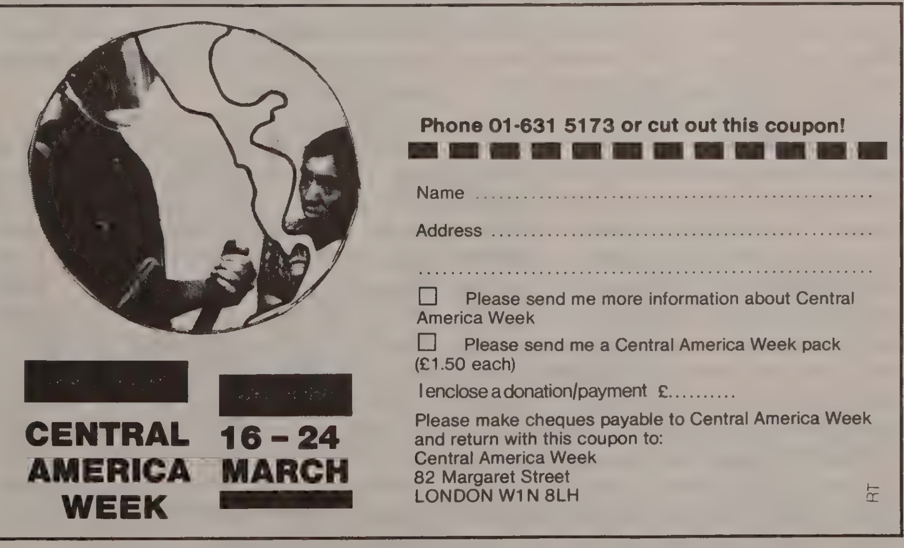
Our language is not fully developed. Some talented people have extended its arena. Traditional similies and symbols are there because our people cannot cross without that bridge of used language. Possibly new words and forms will emerge with a new generation. I am between two eras.

That is reflected in your work. Are there any poems from your experiences in exile?

Yes, and I am also writing about the conditions in Sind.

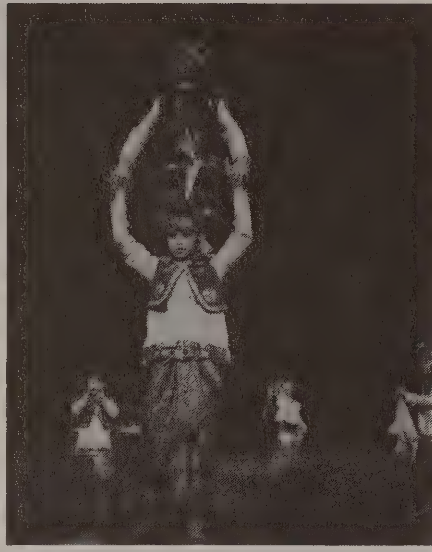
What other prospects and events can we look forward to regarding your poetry?

There is a celebration in Dubai. My collected works will be published soon there. I have also written verse plays.



SABITA BANERJI
TRANSMUTATIONS

THE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF THE INDIAN SUB-CONTINENT HAS SURVIVED COUNTLESS ONSLAUGHTS, DISPLACEMENTS AND VISITING EMPIRES. IT HAS DEVELOPED A POWERFUL IMMUNITY TO ALL CULTURAL VIRUSES BY SIMPLY ABSORBING AND INDIANIZING THEM.



The *ghazal* is an excellent example of this phenomenon — brought to India by the Moghuls, it was absorbed into Indian culture (together with the religion, the food, the language) and re-emerged in a peculiarly Indian incarnation. The *ghazal's* 'naturalization' was taken one step further by Jagjit and Chitra Singh who modernized its treatment in recordings and placed the less universal Urdu (which in turn had replaced the original Arabic) with Hindi words. More recently, Najma Akhtar's *Qareeb* (Togetherness) embraces and appropriates the West Coast sax, western rhythms and backing harmonies in a mellow, sophisticated and ultimately very Indian dialogue.

Such inter-cultural marriages of style are not, of course, new. One of the earliest examples was George Harrison's *Within You Without You,* inspired by Ravi Shankar, Transcendental Meditation and liberal doses of hashish. For the British it was a passing curiosity, for Indians it was rather embarrassing, but it was part of the beginning of a long, on-off flirtation between Indian and Western musics. Hindi films have shown a glorious lack of prejudice in who and where they steal their tunes from, owing much to Western musicals, pop songs and even hymns!

The most successsful fusion so far has undoubtedly been with jazz, which has proved more receptive to the sliding modulations of classical North Indian music. The common ground between them is by now well known — improvisation within a strict framework, scope for interpretation of mood and style by the performer, similarities in rhythm, etc. The first Indo-jazz Fusion concert took place a year before Sgt. Pepper, the same year that Ravi Shankar and Yehudi Menuhin did a concert together at Bath. Since then we've had everything from Shakti to Sheila Chandra, with varying degrees of success and longevity.

Ravi Shanker did his best to live down the Beatles' episode and reminded Western journalists that he was an accomplished classical musician long before the Beatles existed. Nevertheless, he continued to experiment with east-west duets. No distinct musical form nor a following has yet emerged from them, however, and Shankar's audiences still prefer his pure and classical work, be they beatniks or intellectuals.

It has taken many years, and growth of familiarity between Western cultures and the communities they play host to, for a true, popular musical fusion to emerge. Najma, for example, embodies the cultural integrity and incongruities of the British 'Asian' lifestyle; she assimilates an orthodox Muslim upbringing with a Western education (she is a qualified engineer). She is as much at home reciting *ghazals* at traditional *mushairas,* as in the disco-atmosphere of a performance of boppy Hindi film music.

In an age of musical change and innovation, Najma moves from classical to pop, from folk to film, experimenting with musical styles and re-arranging songs. Chunni of Alaap seeks new inspiration for his own brand of Bhangra from Western pop, from Africa, from the Middle East; Deepak Khazanchi, Bhangra producer with a vast and eclectic experience of musical styles (heavy metal, Irish folk, Country & Western, reggae and even backing music for male strippers), pours synthesisers, congas, and drum machines into the cocktail with *dholak, tabla* and Punjabi folk songs.

Bhangra mania has recently become loud enough to attract the attention of the media here. It marvels at the phenomenon of young South Asians, hitherto stereotyped as shy, conservative and insular, bunking off school and boogeying on down to the Bhangra beat at the Hammersmith Palais. Though all publicity is good, this attention has hardly been flattering. It invariably misses the more important point that the emergence of Bhangra illustrates: the new generation of British 'Asians' has finally found its voice. The new musical hybrid fills the gap in the young South Asian musical appetite which Hindi film songs, Abba, *ghazals* and unadulterated folk could not completely satisfy. Bhangra is a genuine response to a real need. It is as unique as the generation in which its roots lie. After a diet of duets rendering the latest hit from Boney M or the Hindi film parade, of Punjabi Pepsi and Shirleys doing Hindi versions of western pop, the British 'Asians' wanted something that was neither imitative of the West nor perpetuating the tastes of an older generation. Film music is still popular, but Bhangra is about the British experience.

Educated side-by-side with white British and Afro-Caribbean kids, the new generation is rebelling against conservatism at home and against the imposition of a Western youth culture. Bhangra pop is vibrant, rhythmic, hedonistic like any pop music, but above all it is Indian. For this reason, Gujarati, Bangladeshi and Pakistani youth are also jumping on the Bhangra bandwagon, although its roots are specifically Punjabi. As far as they are concerned, it is *their* music. While white people are welcome to enjoy it and are not excluded from it, neither are they asked for their approval of it. Even if promoters have visions of Heera on *Top of the Pops,* it is vital that it remains in touch with its roots.

Otherwise, as Chunni of Alaap, and Dhami and Kumar of Heera recognise, it loses its power, its meaning, its raison d'etre.

But recognition is important. It is easy for an immigrant culture to remain completely invisible outside its own community and perhaps, as Oscar Wilde asserted, the only thing worse than being talked about, is not being talked about. Not all the media attention has been patronizing and voyeuristic. BBC Radio 1 DJs, John Peel and Andy Kershaw have demonstrated their recognition of new South Asian music, not as a curiosity but as an integral part of the new, multi-faceted British culture. Such recognition is still to be attained in the mainstream British music industry.

While the commercial viability of Bhangra, *Qareeb* or any South Asian music in Britain must, of necessity, be restricted by its cultural context, this is not to say that it should be marginalized. Just as the major recording companies of India learnt a severe lesson by ignoring the potency of the pirate recorder and have only recently responded to the bootlegger's threat by lowering prices and investing in cassette production, the commercial possibilities of South Asian music may be bigger than the established companies think. Until companies like Ashima Records and Multitone Records were established, and before Gramco recognized it popularity and importance, and began promoting British-grown South Asian music, Bhangra financiers and outlets were the local corner shop chains. Their owners, astute merchants with an eye for a sharp deal, had been buying up recording rights outright and raking in the profits.

The next step was the independent labels, and perhaps that will remain South Asian music's niche. It has taken decades for a name like Ravi Shankar to become recognised in the West. If the Bhangra bubble doesn't burst with the sudden injection of hot air from the media, perhaps it, too, will become familiar. And if familiarity disperses the contempt which can exist between two cultures, genuine musical achievements will filter through the barriers and eventually be part of the process of dissolving them.

British producers, like Iain Scott and Bunt Stafford Clark of Triple Earth records, personify the way in which music can lower these barriers while maintaining and reasserting cultural identities. All it takes is open minds and mutual respect.

SABITA BANERJI was born in India. She is a freelance journalist.

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A SHORT STORY

A QUESTION OF HONOUR

BY SAADAT HASAN MANTO

TRANSLATED BY KHALID HASAN

ILLUSTRATED BY SHAHEEN MERALI

If you happen to be on Faras Road, Bombay, and turn into the street called Sufaid Gulli, you run into a cluster of cafés and restaurants. Nothing special about that, Bombay being a city of cafés and restaurants. However, there is something special about Sufaid Gulli. It is the city's red light district where prostitutes of every race and description can be found.

If you went past Sufaid Gulli, you came to Playhouse, a noisy all-day cinema.

There were actually four cinemas in the area, each with its bell-ringing barker. 'Walk in, walk in. First class show for only two annas.' Sometimes, unwilling passers-by were physically pushed inside by these enterprising salesmen.

Street masseurs were always around. Getting your head massaged was a popular pastime in Bombay. I would watch men contentedly getting their skulls reconditioned. It never failed to amuse me.

If you felt like a massage at three in the morning, a *malashia* could easily be sent for, no matter in what part of the city you lived. These fellows were omnipresent, yelling 'pi, pi, pi' — short for *champi* or massage.

The name Faras Road was used to describe the entire prostitutes' quarter. The small side-streets had their own names, but collectively they were referred to as Faras Road or Sufaid Gulli.

The woman sat in small rooms behind bamboo screens. The price varied from eight annas to eight rupees, and from eight rupees to eight hundred rupees. You could find your choice in this versatile buyers' market.

There was also a small Chinatown. It was not clear what occupations its residents engaged in, though some certainly ran restaurants, their names scrawled in funny insect-like letters outside.

Another street in the area was called Arab Gulli, with about twenty to twenty-five Arabs living there, all apparently in the pearl trade. Others were Punjabis or Rampuris.

It was in Arab Gulli that I had a rented room which was so dark that the light had to be kept on at all times. The monthly rent was exactly nine rupees, eight annas.

If you have never lived in Bombay, you would find it hard to believe that its people simply do not interfere in each other's business. If you are dying in your room — *kholi* in Bombayese — nobody is going to give a damn. If a murder takes place in the neighbourhood, nobody is going to bring you the news.

However, there was one man in Arab Gulli who was informed about every single resident of the area. His name was Mammad Bhai. He came from Rampur and had the reputation of being the master of every known martial art. I was told many stories about him when I first moved in, but it was a long time before I got an opportunity to meet him.

I used to leave my *kholi* early in the morning and return late at night. However, this character Mammad Bhai had begun to fascinate me. It was said, for instance, that, single-handed, he could fight off twenty-five men armed with *lathis*. One by one, he could fell them to the ground. It was also said that a knifer of his dexterity was hard to find in Bombay. He could slash an adversary with demonic speed. His victims were said to walk away without noticing anything amiss and then suddenly crumble to the ground — stone dead. 'Nobody has Mammad Bhai's touch,' it was whispered.

My curiosity to meet Mammad Bhai grew every day. You were always conscious of his presence in the area. He was the *dada*, the *burra badmash*, but everyone swore that he was a puritan as far as women were concerned, or, as the local expression went, he was 'wedded to the sanctity of his loincloth'. He was also a sort of local Robin Hood.

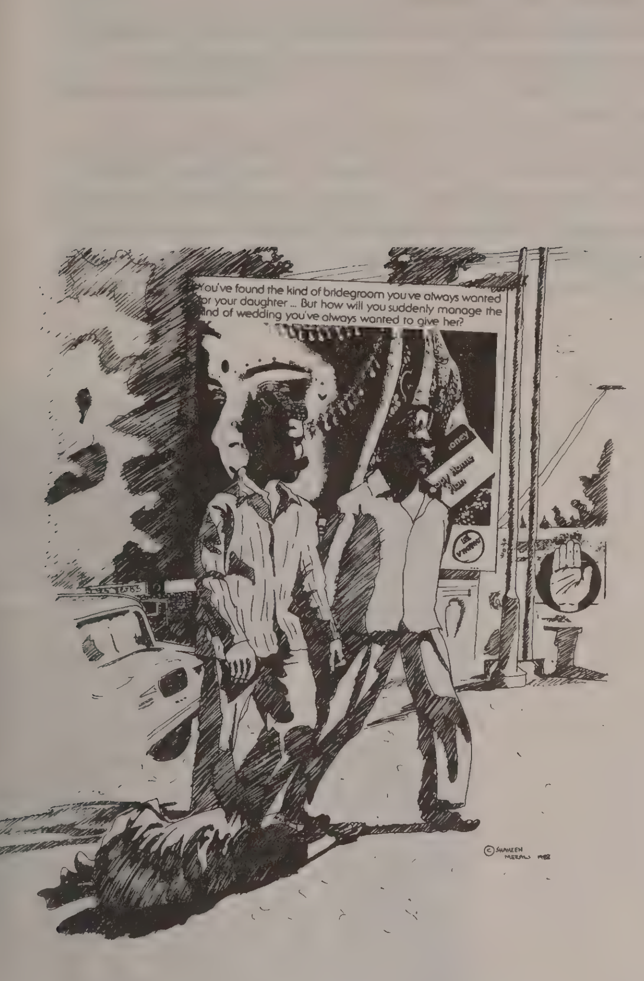
Not only in Arab Gulli, but in the surrounding streets, every poor woman without means knew Mammad Bhai. He used to help them regularly. It was always one of his apprentices — a *shagird*, as they were called — who was sent over. He never went himself.

I did not know what means of income Mammad Bhai had. He was said to dress well, eat well and drive himself around in a dandy pony *tonga*, invariably accompanied by two or three *shagirds*. They would make a round of the bazaar, stop at a local shrine briefly, then trot back into Arab Gulli, get into one of its Iranian cafés for a long session, with Mammad Bhai holding forth on the intricacies of martial arts.

Next to my *kholi* was the *kholi* of a male dancer from Marwar who had told me hundreds of stories about Mammad Bhai. He once said: 'Mammad Bhai is simply peerless. Once I came down with cholera. Somebody informed Mammad Bhai and he got every Faras Road doctor into my *kholi*, warning them that if something went wrong with Ashiq Hussain, he would bump them off personally.'

Then Ashiq Hussain added in an emotional voice: 'Manto sahib, Mammad Bhai is an angel. When he threatened the doctors, you could see them trembling. Then they really got down to the treatment and I was bouncing about like a ball in two days flat.'

There were other stories I had heard about Mammad Bhai in the filthy and third class cafés of Arab Gulli. One man, probably a *shagird*, told me that Mammad Bhai always carried a razor-sharp steel dagger tucked against his thigh, so sharp that he could shave himself with it. It was kept unsheathed and was so lethal that had Mammad Bhai not been a careful man, he could have seriously injured himself with it.



So, with each passing day, my keenness to meet this man increased. I would try to imagine him. A tall, muscular, formidable figure, the kind of man they used as a model to advertise the Hercules bicycle.

Tired after my long day, I would generally hit my bed and fall asleep immediately. There was never time to meet Mammad Bhai. I often thought of skipping work one day to catch a glimpse of him. Unfortunately, I was never able to do that. I had a ridiculous job.

One day, I suddenly came down with high fever. I am hardy by nature and have never required care, but God knows what kind of a fever it was. It felt as if someone was slowly crushing my spine. For the first time in my life, I felt in need of help, but I had nobody around.

For two days I lay in agony all alone. There were no visitors, not that I had expected any. I hardly knew anyone. The few friends I had lived in far-flung areas. If I had died, for instance, they would never have even come to know and, in any case, who cared in Bombay whether you lived or died.

I was in terrible shape. Ashiq Hussain the dancer had gone back home because his wife was ill, according to the tea boy — *chokra* — from the Iranian café.

One day, I decided to try the impossible — get up from my bed and go to one of the bazaar doctors. Suddenly, there was a knock at the door. I thought it was the *chokra.* In a barely audible voice, I said, 'Come in.'

The door opened to reveal a man of slight build. The first thing I noticed about him was his moustache. It was his entire personality, and without it, one would hardly have noticed him.

He walked in, giving his Emperor Kaiser Wilhelm moustache a twirl. He was followed by three or four men I did not know.

The man with the Kaiser Wilhelm moustach said to me in a very soft voice: 'Vimto sahib, this is no good. Why didn't you send me word you were ill?

That I had been called Vimto instead of Manto was nothing new, nor was I in the mood to correct him. All I could say in my weak, feverish voice to the moustach was: 'Who are you?'

'Mammad Bhai,' came the cryptic answer.

I almost rose from my bed. 'Mammad Bhai. . . Mammad Bhai, the famous *dada*?'

It was a bit tactless, but he ignored it. With his little finger he gave his mouthache a slight lift and smiled. 'That's right, Vimto bhai, I am Mammad, the famous *dada.* It was the *chokra* who told me how sick you were. This is no *sala* good. You should have sent me word. When something like this happens, Mammad Bhai *sala* loses his cool.'

I was about to say something, when he ordered one of his companions, 'Hey, what's your name. Go run to what's his name that *sala* doctor. Tell him Mammad Bhai wants him here double quick. Tell him to run. Drop whatever he is doing. And let the *sala* not forget to bring his stuff with him.'

The man whom Mammad Bhai had commissioned for the errand disappeared. I looked at him and remembered the stories I had heard about him, but all I could see was his moustache to give himself a macho touch.

Since there was no chair, I invited Mammad Bhai to sit on my bed, an offer he refused, saying drily, 'Never mind.'

He began to pace around, although the room was hardly capable of offering such luxury. Presently, he produced his famous dagger from somewhere. It was a dazzling sight. At first I thought it was made of silver. He ran it gently over his wrist and any hair that came in its path was instantly shaved away. This seemed to please him and he began to trim his nails with it.

His mere arrival had brought my fever down several degrees, or so it seemed. 'Mammad Bhai,' I said, 'this dagger that you carry is awfully sharp. Aren't you afraid you'll hurt yourself?'

Neatly slicing off another nail, he said: 'Vimto bhai, this dagger is meant for my enemies. How can it hurt me?'

He sounded like a father speaking fondly of his child. 'How can my own child hurt me?'

Finally, the doctor came. His name was Pinto — and I was Vimto. He greeted Mammad Bhai respectfully and asked what the matter was. 'I'll tell you what the matter is,' he replied sternly. 'If you don't get Vimto bhai well, *sala* you're going to pay for it.'

Obediently, Dr Pinto began to examine me. He took my pulse, put his stethoscope on my chest, tapped my back, checked my blood pressure and asked me how and when I had fallen ill. Then he said to Mammad Bhai — not me — 'Nothing to worry. It is only malaria. I'll give him a shot.'

Mammad Bhai shaved some more hair off his wrist and said: 'I know nothing about these things. If you want to give him a shot, then give him a *sala* shot, but if anything happens to him, remember. . .'

'No, Mammad Bhai, everything is going to be fine. Now let me give him a shot.' He opened his bag and took out a syringe.

'Wait, wait,' Mammad Bhai screamed. Pinto put the syringe back into the bag and looked at Mammad Bhai nervously.

'I just cannot watch anybody getting the needle,' he said and walked out, followed by his entourage.

Dr Pinto gave me a quinine injection neatly, although normally it is a very painful affair. When he was done, I asked him what I owed him. 'Ten rupees', he said. I reached for my wallet, which lay under my pillow, and had just paid him when Mammad Bhai entered the room.

'What's going on?' he screamed. 'I was only paying the doctor his fee,' I said. '*Sala,* what do you think you are doing?' he screamed at Pinto. 'Mammad Bhai, I swear I didn't ask for it,' Pinto replied meekly.

'*Sala,* if you want your fee, you get it from me. Give Vimto sahib back his money.' It was immediately returned.

Mammad Bhai twirled his mostache and smiled: 'Vimto sahib. How can a doctor from my area take money from you? Had he done that, I swear I would have had my moustache shaved off. Everyone here is your slave.'

I asked Mammad Bhai how he knew me.

'How do I know you? Is there anyone here whom Mammad Bhai doesn't know? My friend, Mammad Bhai is the king and looks after his people. My detectives keep me informed about everything. Arrivals, departures, who is doing what.'

Then he added: 'I know everything about you.'

'Is that so?' I asked.

'*Sala*. . .don't I know? You come from Amritsar. You are a Kashmiri. You work here for newspapers. You owe ten rupees to the Bismillah Hotel in the bazaar, which is why you no longer pass that way. In Bhindi Bazaar there is a *panwala* who curses you day and night. You owe him twenty rupees ten annas for the cigarettes he sold you on credit.'

It was humiliating.

Mammad Bhai patted his moustache and smiled. 'Vimto bhai, you are not to worry. All your debts have been paid. You can start with a clean slate. I have warned these *salas* never to bother you. You have Mammad Bhai's word.'

That was nice of him, but since I was not feeling too good after my shot, all I could manage to murmur was, 'Mammad Bhai, may God bless you.'

Mammad Bhai gave his moustache another twirl and left.

Dr Pinto came twice a day, but when asked what he was owed, he would say: 'No, Mr Manto, it is between Mammad Bhai and me. I wouldn't dream of charging you.'

It was comical. The doctor was paying for my treatment.

Mammad Bhai himself came daily, sometimes in the morning, sometimes later, but never without five or six of his *shagirds*. 'You are going to get better. It is only *sala* malaria,' he would console me.

In about two weeks, I was back on my feet. By now, I had come to know Mammad Bhai quite well. He was between twenty-five and thirty and a fast mover. Arab Gulli residents swore that when he threw his dagger at an enemy, it went straight through the unfortunate man's heart.

One day, I ran into him outside one of the Chinese restaurants in Arab Gulli.

I said to him: 'Mammad Bhai, this is the age of guns and revolvers. Why do you go around with this dagger?'

Mammad Bhai touched his moustache and replied: 'Vimto bhai, guns are boring. Even a child can fire them. What is the point? All you do is press the trigger and bang they go. But daggers and knives. . . by God it is fun using them. What was that you once said? Yes, art. It is an art.'

'What is a revolver? Nothing but a toy. But look at this dagger and how sharp it is.' He wet his thumb and ran it lovingly over the edge. 'It makes no sound. Just push it into the bell and the *sala* doesn't even so much as squirm. Guns are rubbish.'

In the eyes of the law, he was a *dada,* a *goonda,* but what I could not understand then — and do not understand now — was why he was considered dangerous. There was nothing dangerous about him, except his moustache.

Somebody once told me that Mammad Bhai always massaged his moustache after each meal with butter, because it was guaranteed to provide nourishment to the hair. So, the real Mammad Bhai was either the moustache or the dagger?

The prostitutes of the area treated him like a *pir*, and as he was the acknowledged *dada,* it was only natural for him to have a mistress or two among them, but my enquiries had failed to reveal any such liaison.

One morning, while I was on my way to work, I heard in the Chinese restaurant that Mammad Bhai had been arrested. This was surprising because he had influence with the local police.

I asked around and was told that an Arab Gulli woman, Shirin Bai, who had a young daughter, had gone to Mammad Bhai the day before in a distraught state. Her daughter had been raped. 'You are the *dada* and my daughter has been raped. What are you going to do about it? Sit at home?' she had screamed.

Mammad Bhai had first abused the old woman, then asked, 'What do you want me to do? Go rip open that bastard's stomach?'

Finally, he had pulled out his dagger, run his finger along the sharp, glittering edge and said, 'Go home. The necessary will be done.'

The necessary was done within half an hour. The man who had raped the old woman's daughter was stabbed to death.

Mammad Bhai was arrested, but he had done the job so quickly and with such care that no witness could be found. And in any case, even if there had been witnesses, none would have testified against Mammad Bhai in court. He was bailed out.

He had spent two days in the lockup, but had been kept in comfort. The police constables and the inspectors knew him well. However, when he came out, one noticed that his brush with the law had been a big shock to him. Even his moustache looked somewhat droopy.

I met him in the Chinese restaurant. His clothes, normally so neat, looked shabby.

I did not mention the murder to him, but he himself said: 'Vimto sahib, I am sorry the *sala* took such a long time dying. It was all my fault. I did not stab him cleanly. I botched it.'

You can imagine my reaction. He was not sorry the man had died, but that he had not been able to dispatch him neatly and forthwith.

The court case was soon to come up and Mammad Bhai was worried. He had never seen the inside of a court in his life. I don't know if he had committed any murders before, but what I do know is that he simply had no idea what sort of birds magistrates, lawyers and witnesses were. They had never entered his life before.

One could see that he was worried. When the date for the first hearing was announced, Mammad Bhai said to me: 'Vimto sahib, I would sooner die than appear in court. I don't know what kind of a place it is.'

His Arab Gulli friends assured him that there was nothing to it. There were no witnesses and the only thing which might go against him would be his moustache. It might prejudice the magistrate.

As I have said, had it not been for this moustache, Mammad Bhai could never have been mistaken for a *dada*.

As the date approached, Mammad Bhai began to show unmistakable signs of anxiety. When I met him in the Iranian café, his agitation was obvious. His friends had told him: 'Mammad Bhai, if you have to go to court, then for God's sake do something about that moustache. One look and the magistrate will jail you.'

One day, while we were sitting in the Iranian café, he pulled out his dagger and threw it into the street. "Mammad Bhai', I exclaimed, 'what have you done?'

'Vimto bhai, everything is going downhill. I have to appear in court. Everybody tells me that one look at my moustache and the *sala* magistrate would convict me. What do I do?'

I could not help feeling what a criminal his moustache made him look. Finally, I said: 'Mammad Bhai, your moustache is most likely to affect your chances in court. The decision will not be so much against you as your moustache.'

'Should I then get rid of it?' he asked, running his hand lovingly over the offending feature.

'If you want to,' I replied.

'It is not what I want, it is what everybody seems to think I should do to make a good impression on the *sala* magistrate. What do you think, Vimto bhai?'

'Well, get it over and done with then,' I replied.

The next day Mammad Bhai had his moustache shaved off, since that had been the universal advice.

His case was heard in the court of Mr F H Tail. He appeared without his moustache. There were no prosecution witnesses, but the magaistrate nevertheless declared him a dangerous *goonda* and ordered him out of the province of Bombay. He was given just one day to settle his affairs.

When we got out of the court, we said nothing to each other. Involuntarily, his fingers rose to his face, but there was no longer anything there to caress.

In the evening, we met in the Iranian café. About twenty of his *shagirds* sat around him drinking tea. He did not greet me when I entered. He looked very harmless. And he was depressed.

'What's on your mind?' I asked.

He swore loudly, then added thoughtfully, 'The Mammad Bhai you knew is dead.'

'What does it matter, Mammad Bhai — one has to live. If not in Bombay, then elsewhere,' I said.

He began to abuse everything under the sun. '*Sala*, I am not bothered where I live. What bothers me is why I got my moustache shaved off.'

Then he began to abuse everyone who had persuaded him to get rid of his moustache. 'If I had to be exiled from the province anyway, I should have gone with, not without, my moustache.'

I couldn't help laughing. '*Sala*, what sort of a man are you, Vimto? God is my witness, I wouldn't have cared if they'd hanged me. But look at me now. *Sala*. I got terrified of my own moustache.'

Then he beat his breast with both hands and cried: 'A curse on you, *sala* Mammad Bhai. Scared of your own moustache. Go sleep with your mother.'

Tears welled up in his eyes, an odd sight on an egg-smooth face.

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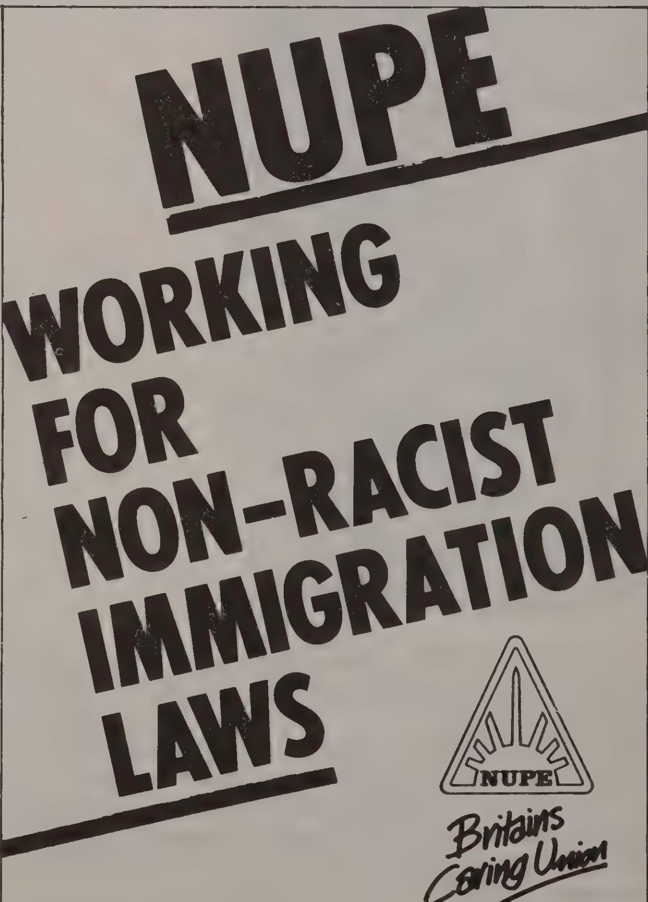

NATIONAL UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

JITENDER VERMA
IN PURSUIT OF BLACK THEATRE

SCENE FROM EXILE IN THE FOREST BY REZUL KABIR

What is 'Black' about Black Theatre? Is it the colour of the performers, the producers, or the writers? How black does the skin colour have to be to be classified 'Black'? The content: is it Love, Hate, Ambition, Comedy 'Black'?

'Blackness' is a sensibility, an approach to theatre which is founded in a theatre experience born in India, Afrika, and the Caribbean and practised in Britain today. This is another and a more fundamental definition and criteria of Black theatre. If historically and politically to be Black is to be non-white, it follows that Black theatre must be an *alternative* to White theatre.

What then, is White theatre? As defined by current practices, it is *realistic* theatre: a theatre in search of the 'reality of life.' Yet, that is not the only road to theatre in the world.

Bharata, in the 4th Century AD in India, compiled an enormous, detailed treatise on the art of performing, the space where performances should take place, and the kind of audiences theatre should have. In the *Natya Shastra* ('The Book of Theatre'), Bharata defined a performance as consisting of four elements: Voice, Gesture, Costume and Make-up. The Mind had no place in his analysis. It was study which surpassed in its realism anything even Stanislavsky wrote in the 19th century. For Bharata, as indeed for all Indian theatre, theatre is fundamentally *not* an imitation of life. It is a mimicry of it. The mimicry could take the form of 'natya' ('stylization') or 'loyka' ('populist farce'). This is very far from the Western theatre opposition of realism versus non-realism.

There are ways then, of seeing theatre other than those foisted on the contemporary world by the London critics. It is important to bear this point in mind for, when 'authorities' talk of the 'classics' of world theatre, they usually mean Chekhov, Sophocles, Brecht, Shakespeare, Beckett, but what of Bhasa, Kalidasa, Asaita, Thakur, Wole Soyinka?

Black theatre, certainly as the Tara Arts Group in South London has exemplified over the past 11 years, has a duty to find its own language. This language is rooted, on the one hand, in the conscious wresting of the Black theatrical past from the dead hands of white historiography; and, on the other, in the new breath and life of the Black contemporary experience. The discovery of a distinct language is necessary if Black theatre activists are to achieve their politics (their 'Blackness') *in* the theatre, as opposed to putting their theatre in politics.

Western theatre giants (a prime example would be Brecht) have robbed, freely and joyously, from the East (China) to create their own distinctive language in theatre. Can we do less than embrace the lost knowledge of our own theatre, and reject European evaluations of theatre as 'ritualistic', 'traditional', or 'folksy'? We must give a new lease of life to the text-bound, realistic dullness of contemporary British theatre, a form which forces performers to act as if they were ashamed of their own bodies.

There is much to criticise in terms of contemporary British theatre, but not all of it has to do with the lack of access for Black people. Black theatre people have a responsibility if they are to leave more than a footnote in the history of British theatre. We will not do so if all we continue to produce is, in essence, White theatre 'coloured up'. There is a need for a different aesthetics of theatre. Not everyone will wish to go down this road. But if any wish to claim their theatre to be 'Black', then, sooner or later, this imperative must be recognized.

JITENDER VERMA was born in Kenya. He is a founder member and artistic director of Tara Arts Theatre Company. He recently directed *Tewodros* for the Arts Theatre in London.

SCENE FROM THE BROKEN THIGH BY YOGESH BHATT

KRISANTHA SRI BHAGGIYADATTA

The Lord is my shepherd And I'm a sheep

my first winter i pumped gas
in a uniform
frostbitten
i lost radio-contact
with my toes

frank the foreman from newfoundland
was a little fascist

my first summer i washed floors
and desks in banks and data centres
i learned of the explosive compound
of coffee in styrofoam
cigarettes in ashtrays
plus detergent

chemistry
that scorches the hairs
of nostrils
that corrodes the skin
of cleaners
that stiffen the white-collars
of office-workers

if only i knew then
what i know now

Bank of Nova Scotia
Imperialist in the Caribbean
loves hiring south asians
as clerks.

i washed their floors
and guarded their banks

one manager had a sign:
too many indians
not enough chiefs. . .

the heat of
the high cost of labour

constantly drying
the spit
on the lips
of the bourgeoisie

my last day at work
the doors opened before me
from the relief they breathed

as the last paycheque
left his hands to mine
a crack
a tree tore from its roots. . .

In the nation's business newspaper
the cartoons and the horoscope and the job ads
all on the same pages

In the middle of the job interview four hundred years
later
a man with a british accent asks
how come i know english?

SAQI FAROOQI

Ghazal

I struck my foot on the rock
water came
Yet my iron body
turned out to be
dust.

It was just a face
that I've forgotten now
just a moment that
turned out to be
an enemy till death.

There's one single checkmate
that follows me everywhere
Though in every move I
turned out to be
a winner.

Life was precious but
I grew tired of it
My lifework
turned out to be
unloading my life.

There's no point in grieving
at parting from her
When meeting and parting
turned out to be
my wish.

I grieve that I still live
so diminished
In the balance of of emotion she
turned out to be
the heavier.

SAQI FAROOQI

Growth

And look over there
Thousands, thousands of tender jute plants
rank upon rank, tell their friends
We've grown up so fast —
the green water
that used to lap our chests
has now come down to our ankles!

SAQI FAROOQI

The Trust

In a small town
in a school
a boy caught a tired butterfly
and as she tried to get free
the purple-blue of her wings
was powdered into the air
The boy put her
on a table, under a paperweight
he burned her wings with matches
he cut her corpse
in half
with his penknife

That boy has gone, but
for thirty years
I've had his dirty penknife
and on the penknife
those brownish-yellow bloodstains
trouble me —
an acid taste on my tongue
a tense fatigue
I'm bone-weary
but I can't sleep

SAQI FAROOQI

Shah Sahib and Sons

Shah Sahib was bright-eyed
with good manners
and on the dark roads of daily toil
wearing the torn sandals of patience
he strode forward with firmness and dignity.
And he was overtaken by the disease of living
The foods within his reach
were strangely lightless
there were no nutrients in them.
That pearl-brightness in his eyes
slowly diminished
The blood in his pupils
congealed like moss
slowly slowly
cataracts
like emeralds
came over his eyes
A strange veil fell
he was curtained off from the world.

His restless eyeballs
dried out like marbles
so useless
that they hid and lamented
like closed oyster-shells
behind an agate door.
An onanistic darkness
held their mirror.

Lying in wait for the enemy light
his life was trench warfare
he saw so much, he stopped seeing

. . .and when his fruitful eyes
were touched with the needle of blackness,
when from his verdant eyes
the golden leaves of light began to fall
Shah Sahib had still less shelter.
In his blind vengeful eyes the world
congealed as a killer
as in the eyes of a dying snake
lingers the enemy's image.
Utterly cast down
he wandered in empty deserts of self
as though he couldn't see the living at all
as though he had no ties
to the vague shapes in his memory.

His restless glittering eyes
like a snail's quivering antennae
used to see, smell, touch.
When they went, he came loose from life,
the bond of feeling broke —
that deep tie
that everlasting connection
with things lying all around
with laughing, crying people
snapped
like a zebra's spine
when the tiger springs.
For years he was restless, ill at ease.

One day a desert caught fire in his eyes
a thought came — his face lit up.
Embracing his sons
his heart overflowed, he wept like a cloudburst.
Afterwards, with cruel flames
of murderous fiery acid
he burned their hunger-disciplined eyes
and fell to the ground in prayer
as if in deep sleep
as if comatose.

Over desolate roads, on and on
four blind friends chorus,
'Oh generous ones, may you live in the city of
wealth!
Oh you who have sight
give us sight!"

SAQI FAROOQI was born in Gorakhpur, North India in 1936. He now lives in Britain. His most recent collection of poems, *A Listening Game* (translated from Urdu by Francis Pritchett) was published in 1987 by Lokamaya Press.

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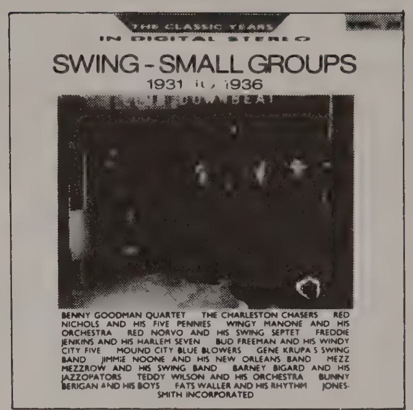

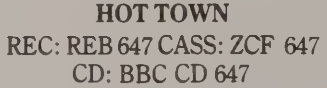

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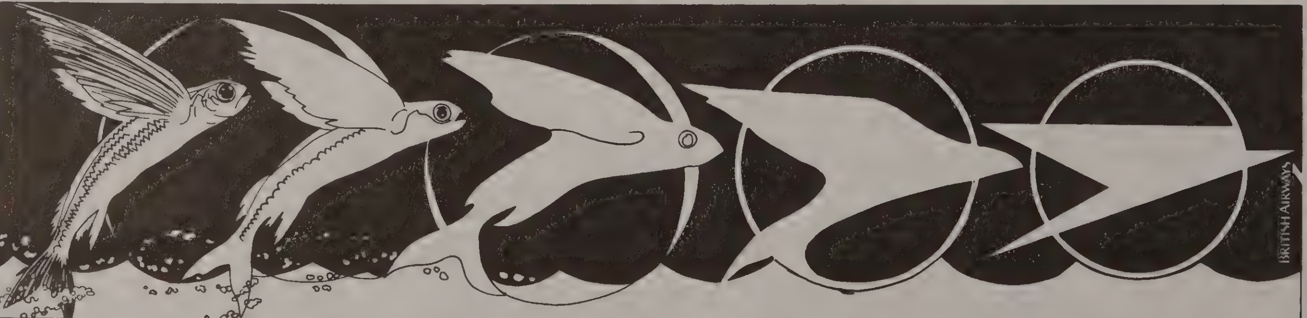

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ENGLAND, 1963
OXFORD UNIVERSITY

The slogan which, I must confess, had given me the greatest pleasure when I first reached Oxford was not directly related to politics. If there was a greater enemy than marxism in Pakistan it was atheism. Both were banned from the public domain, but we could, at least, talk about marxism and socialism at college or in the cafes. Religion had to be questioned in whispers and even then one had to be careful. I had never believed in supernatural deities, not even as a child, but had learnt not to broadcast the fact. At college the lecturers and fellow-students with whom one could share one's atheism were, in many ways, much closer personal friends than those who were on a similar wave-length politically, but had not abandoned old superstitions. When I first saw a pimpled youth, wearing a tattered crimson corduroy jacket, standing on a chair in front of a stand at the Freshers' Fair and shouting at the top of his voice, 'Down with God', I was both excited and moved. In fact I was a triffle incredulous, which must have explained the fact that I just stood there and stared. Finally, a bit embarrassed, the man in the corduroy jacket stepped down and recruited me to the Oxford University Humanist Group. I was to discover, much to my surpise, that debates and discussions here were far more stimulating than those conducted within the careerist confines of the Labour Club.

ENGLAND, 1964

Malcolm X spoke at the Oxford Union some months before he was assassinated at the Audubon Ballroom in New York in February 1965.

We talked for many hours while he consumed his tea and I sipped my brandy. I explained why religion could never be a solution to anyone's problems in a collective sense. Islam was no better or worse than Judaism or Christianity. Many crimes had been committed on behalf of all three faiths. He listened quite attentively, only venturing an opinion when I gave him a chance. 'Suppose,' I asked him aggressively at one point, 'you lived in Saudi Arabia or Pakistan or some other Muslim paradise. How would you define yourself? To say that you're a Muslim doesn't mean a thing. Everyone's a Muslim. How are you different from the King of Saudi Arabia?' He had been smiling a lot while I was talking and I stopped, waiting to receive a devastating rebuke. 'It's good to hear you talk like that,' he said, much to my amazement. 'I'm beginning to ask myself many of the same questions.' I then told him what I thought about the Black Muslims. He did not rebut me, but explained the conditions which helped them to recruit young blacks. He said that he did not trust them either and had established his own group called the Organization for Afro-American Unity. He did not believe in non-violence. On this he was firm, unrepentant and refused to compromise. 'Martin Luther King plays into their hands', he said. 'The Klan lynches blacks, terrorizes and kills white kids who go to the South for registration drives. The cops are part of the Klan system. King tells people to turn the other cheek. You can't deal with bullies like that. . . I know that's why the white liberal establishment loves King and denounces me. I have to tell the truth. I tell them that their system is corrupt and based on the oppression of blacks in America and elsewhere. Blacks are the powder keg.

As I was getting ready to leave I shook hands and expressed the hope that we would meet again before too long. He smiled and, without any trace of emotion, said: 'I don't think so. By this time next year, I'll be dead.' I froze, staring at him in disbelief. We sat down again. He explained that as long as he had been a Black Muslim they had just about tolerated him. But since his break with the Nation of Islam, he had been moving in other directions. He had realized that race alone could never be a sufficient criterion for achieving social change. He had dropped his opposition to black-white inter-marriages. He had allied openly with the enemies of Washington in Havana, Hanoi and Algiers. These facts meant that 'they have already ordered my execution. They don't like uppity niggers. Never have. They'll kill me. I'm sure.' Who were 'they'? He shrugged his shoulders, as if to say that the question was too foolish to merit a reply.

VIETNAM, 1967
BOMBING RAIDS

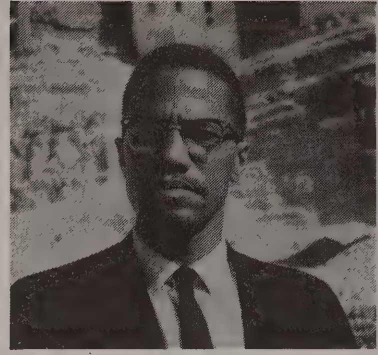
Impossible to visualize this agony in the West. I had not been particularly affected when I had heard the planes overhead, but this is too much. There are mangled dead bodies. There is a hospital with Red Cross markings, which has been singled out and destroyed. If the shelters had not been evacuated, the casualties would have been very high. I look for military targets. There are none. Sadness mingles with anger and rage. Would the Americans ever bomb a European city in this fashion today? The Vietnamese are clearly not human beings as far as Washington is concerned.

VIETNAM, 1967
MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER, PHAM VAN DONG

I asked him [the PM] why the Vietnamese did not invite international brigades. Some of us wanted to fight, but more importantly it would be an enormous propaganda victory to have Americans fighting side-by-side with the Vietnamese against a common enemy. Pham van Dong, who was seated at the other extremity of the large reception room, stood up and walked towards me. Surprised, I got up and waited. He embraced and kissed me as if to thank me for the thought. Then he returned to his chair. 'There are many problems with this proposal,' he replied. 'First, this is not Spain in the thirties, where the technological level of combat was primitive. You have seen the scale of the US attacks on us. International brigades are no good against B52 bombers. In the South any brigade from abroad would not be able to function at all effectively. Many areas we control by night are overrun by the enemy during the day. We disappear effectively because, after all, we are Vietnamese. Just imagine

trying to hide several thousand European faces in the forest of the South. That is one problem. Then there is the fact that we have two great socialist states in existence today, the Soviet Union and China. They might misunderstand the call for international brigades.' (I frowned at this stage not understanding what he meant. He noticed and smiled). 'You see, my friend, they might think that it was our way of criticizing them for lack of sufficient support and we would not like them to think that, would we? The propaganda value, I agree with you, would be good but even if we had them to help repair bridges and roads and schools and hospitals we would be more worried about their safety and would have to expend more resources on housing and looking after them. But we appreciate the suggestion.'

I asked about the Geneva Agreements of 1954. Was it not the case that if they had continued the war then, instead of bowing to Sino-Soviet pressure, we might have been spared the most recent phase of the conflict. He nodded and was silent for a while. Then came his response: 'It was the unhappiest time in our history. We would not do it again.



MALCOLM X

ENGLAND, 1968
VIETNAM SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN 17 MARCH DEMONSTRATION IN LONDON

When a number of us arrived at Trafalgar Square the next day, an hour and a half before proceedings were due to start, we were amazed by the sight that greeted us. The square was already full and the NLF tricolour dominated the large crowd. More and more people began to arrive and the stewards who were counting the numbers reported just as the speeches began that there were over 25,000 people present already. Vanessa Redgrave had brought greetings from other actors, actresses and film directors. The speeches were short and to the point and every speaker attacked the complicity of the Labour government. Two days previously a number of left MPs had written to *The Times,* expressing their support for Harold Wilson. They, too, were verbally savaged and the response of the crowd indicated a contempt for these clapped-out supporters of *Tribune.*

As we led the march towards Oxford Street, the main VSC contingent was in the lead with a marvellous display of red flags and banners, flanked with gigantic NLF emblems. Just behind us were the Germany SDS with their banner. It was an impressive sight and the mood was one of optimism. If the conversations of those who came that day had been recorded, I am sure that the overwhelming majority wanted more than just a victory in Vietnam. We wanted a new world without wars, oppression and class exploitation, based on comradeship and internationalism. The wealth of the First World, if properly utilised, could help transform the Third World. Moreover, if a meaningful socialism was successful in the West, if would not just be the City of London and its State that would tremble, but also the bureaucrats in Moscow, who were equally scared of change from below. We were aware that a new spring had arrived in Prague and that many exciting discussions were taking place at Charles University and in the Czech Communist Party. But it was not just talk. It was also a feeling that change was possible. That was what Vietnam had taught all of us.

We filled Oxford Street, then turned into South Audley Street and marched into the Square. The police tried to hold us back, but we were many and they were few and their first lines crumbled, permitting us to enter Grosvenor Square and occupy the area directly in front of the embassy. They were not going to let us deliver a letter and so we asked stewards to escort Vanessa Redgrave to safety. Then we saw the police horses. A cry went up that 'The cossacks are coming', and an invisible tension united everyone. Arms were linked across the square as the mounted police charged through us to try and break our formation. A hippy who tried to offer a mounted policeman a bunch of flowers was truncheoned to the ground. Marbles were thrown at the horses and a few policemen fell to the ground, but none were surrounded and beaten up. The fighting continued for almost two hours. An attempt to arrest me was prevented by a few hundred people coming to my rescue and surrounding me so that no policeman could get very near. We got close to the imperialist fortress, but by 7pm we decided to evacuate the Square. Many comrades were badly hurt and one pregnant woman had been beaten up severely.

Our phones kept ringing till late in the night as we collated more and more information. It was undoubtedly a violent confrontation. Alain Krivine had been amazed at our militancy, which he said was somewhat lacking in France. On the other hand, the Germany SDSers were displeased. They felt we should have prepared our supporters, provided them with helmets and battled it out with staves. We explained that one of our aims was to win support and we were not as isolated from public opinion on Vietnam as were the Berlin SDS. Our different tactics reflected this. In fact, one of the opinion polls carried out after the Grosvenor Square demonstration revealed that a majority were opposed to US policies in Vietnam, and to our great delight, nearly 20 per cent wanted a Vietnamese victory.

PARKISTAN, 1969
REVOLT AGAINST MILITARY RULE

The whole atmosphere was very different from much of Europe for in this situation one could smell power. That is what the struggle was about and the only party in West Pakistan in a position to take over the army was Bhutto and his People's Party. He had encapsulated his party's manifesto in the slogan of 'Food, Clothing and Shelter' for everyone. He talked about expropriating the landed gentry and the urban rich and feeding the poor in town and countryside. The mullahs had denounced him fiercely inside and outside the mosques, but the radical appeal of his speeches coupled with the promise of social and economic reforms had neutered the men with beards. Their appeal, in any event, was always restricted to petty bourgeois circles in the big towns. In the countryside, the mullah was not a greatly revered figure and Bhutto's proposed land reforms made the landlords tremble with fear.

I was invited to speak to Bar associations, to segregated assemblies in women's colleges, to doctors and medical students and to working-class meetings. The entire country seemed to be crying out for change, but before I could accurately estimate the possibilities I had to visit East Pakistan,

VANESSA REDGRAVE & TARIQ ALI
ANTI-VIETNAM DEMONSTRATION

the distant province of Bengal, separated from the West by a thousand miles of India.

EAST PAKISTAN, 1969
BANGLADESH, TWO YEARS BEFORE INDEPENDENCE WAS PROCLAIMED AND CIVIL WAR BROKE OUT

I was only in Dhaka for a few days, but it became clear that this was a different world. Linguistically, culturally and politically it was a separate nation. Its oppression made it difficult not to become a separate state. And yet I felt much more at ease, intellectually and politically, in Dhaka than in Rawalpindi. The political culture was far more advanced, I spoke at a large student meeting underneath the famous Amtala tree on the campus of Dhaka University. They refused to let me speak in Urdu, a sure indicator of their anger against West Pakistan. The popular cry was 'English, English!' and even though one of the voices demanding this was that of Nicholas Tomalin of *The Sunday Times,* unmistakeable in the back row, I had to cave in to popular demand.

I spoke that afternoon of the struggle in Pakistan, but I went further and warned them that their demands for regional autonomy would never be conceded by the army. 'Rather than grant that, they will crush you. The only serious option is independence. A Red Bengal could become the Yenan of our subcontinent.' These ideas had never been stated in this form in public and I felt the excitement of the audience. Even the Awami League students were stunned. Was I not after all a Punjabi? How could I talk in this fashion? But they recovered soon and cheered me till they were hoarse. Afterwards I was mobbed and the one question everyone wanted to discuss was how they could achieve their goal. If, at that stage, the political leaders had realized the holocaust that was to follow they could have politically armed their supporters and prepared them for the inevitable civil war.

LONDON, 1970s
JOHN LENNON

John Lennon was, in fact, passing through the most radical phase of his life. He had seen a *Red Mole* special issue on the UCS (Upper Clyde Shipbuilders) work-in in Scotland. Our cover was a reprint of a 19th century caricature of a fat, ugly, bloated capitalist confronting a strong, handsome and noble-looking worker. He loved that cover more than the convoluted article on the inside and later showed it to Phil Spector and others at Tittenhurst. After he had finished

ANTI-VIETNAM DEMONSTRATION,
GROSVENOR SQUARE, LONDON 1968

Imagine he rang and asked Robin Blackburn and myself to come down for tea. They were making a video of *Imagine* and he wanted us to be filmed chatting to him.

That very day Regis Debray, freed from prison a month previously, turned up in London. He had come to *The Red Mole* office, walked up the rickety stairs, seen a dusty poster with his image on it underlined with the slogan 'Liberez Regis Debray', smiled and taken it down. He had come to thank us for our support and talk about the changes in Europe. He had heard about '68 in his prison cell in Camiri and had wondered whether or not it had been that serious. Robin and I sat down with him in a transport cafe near Kings Cross station and described the movement. He was sceptical. Then he asked us: 'But why have you become Trotskyists? Why?' We explained our reasons, pointing out to him that theory and reality had come close together and Mandel's influence on us had been very strong. He muttered something about the 'greatness of Trotsky' and 'the smallness of the sects that claimed his heritage'. As time was short we asked Debray whether he wanted to accompany us to see Lennon. He was amazed that we mixed in such circles and as the Lennon limousine was cruising to Tittenhurst we tried once again to explain how the politics of the period had affected its culture as well, and on every level.

When we arrived, I told John who our guest was and he received him warmly. Then I took him aside and explained that this poor comrade had been locked up and tortured in a Bolivian prison and had been a friend of Che. That did the trick and Lennon warmed to him and they were filmed together. Listening to the tracks on *Imagine* for the first time was a pleasant surprise. The quality of the songs was extremely high and, fortunately, politics had not smothered art. Lennon had not done a Jean-Luc Goddard. (The more recent work of Goddard, when he embraced an ultra-radical world view heavily coloured by a European Maoism, had waged war against all artistic forms and conventions in the name of revolutionary politics. The result had been, at least as far as I was concerned, both a political and an aesthetic disaster.) Lennon's politics and music in *Imagine* were cemented together by artistic necessities. Other rock groups, most notably The Doors and Jefferson Airplane, sometimes insisted very loudly that rock equalled revolution. Lennon refused to accept that there was any natural equation between rock music and politics. In *Working Class Hero,* a track which I got him to play three times that afternoon, he reached the opposite conclusion. The working-class super star was nothing but a convenient safety-valve for bourgeois society. Listening to that LP was very moving because the music and the songs were in harmony and flowed out of Lennon's deeply-felt and often repressed personal experiences: oppression and neglect in childhood became transformed later into their obverse as he became naked Emperor of the Dream. These were Lennon's *Songs of Experience*, where childhood themes reinforced his political instincts.

TARIQ ALI was born in Lahore, Pakistan in 1943. He is a political activist, writer and journalist. His new book *Street Fighting Years* was recently published by Collins. He is joint editor of Channel Four's *Bandung File.*

VIKRAM SETH

Profiting

Uncomprehending day,
I tie my loss to leaves
And watch them drift away.

The regions are as far,
But the whole quadrant sees
The single generous star.

Yet under star or sun,
For forest tree or leaf
The year has wandered on.

And for the single cells
Held in their sentient skins
An image shapes and tells:

In wreathes of ache and strain
The bent rheumatic potter
Constructs his forms from pain.

VIKRAM SETH

The Great Confucian Temple, Suzhou

Two geese strut through the balustrade, where rust
And stacks of timber marked "Department of
Culture: for Restoration" gather dust.
The ginkgo lodges a complaining dove.
A centipede squirms over "Hong Wu" hewn
In seal-script on the white fragmented stone
Where reign-names of the Ming and Qing lie strewn
In mint and dog-turd, creeper, tile and bone.
Before the frayed vermilion walls and eaves
The plaster statue of a man in red
With pudgy vehemence and rolled-up sleeves
Proclaims the oppressive heritage is dead.
Inside the hall six workmen renovate
The verveless splendour of a corpse of state.

VIKRAM SETH was born in Calcutta, India in 1952. He studied in Britain, China and the USA. His published work includes *The Humble Administrator's Garden* (1985) which won a Commonwealth Poetry Prize, and *The Golden Gate* (1986).

VIKRAM SETH

Song: "Waiting"

As I stood on Dolores Street
With thoughts of sadness and defeat
A cat came from across the way
And sat beneath a Chevrolet.

The sun was hot. His grey-green eyes
Surveyed the scene with small surprise.
I plied my pencil furtively.
The cat took no account of me.

I drew the cat with stubby strokes.
I gave the cat appealing looks.
I walked to him. Without demur
He let me stroke his friendly fur.

My friend had gone to run a race.
My heart beat at an urgent pace.
In my mind's eye I saw him breast
The tape, then fall to earth and rest.

I wished that I could touch his hair
And be to him some comfort there,
But here I was, and here the cat,
And there he was, and that was that.

Since when my friend said we would meet
An hour has passed along the street.
The cat purrs in the noonday sun.
O cat, I know my friend has won!

MAHMOOD JAMAL

Love Song

I saw you dancing
I saw
the breeze scatter
from your fingertips.
I saw your mouth
blossoming suddenly
from your face.
I saw your hair
turning into waves
and crashing
against the shores of my mind.
So enchanting was your presence
that I could not take my eyes
from your breasts.
I do not remember
seeing your legs, the legs
that were the fulcrum of the dance.
I saw your eyes staring
through the forest of my
dreams and flash suddenly
and disappear as I turned my head.
All this I saw
and you insist
that you were standing still.

KAMALA DAS

An Introduction

I don't know politics but I know the names
Of those in power, and can repeat them like
Days of week, or names of months, beginning with
Nehru. I am Indian, very brown, born in
Malabar, I speak three languages, write in
Two, dream in one. Don't write in English, they said,
English is not your mother-tongue. Why not leave
Me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins,
Every one of you? Why not let me speak in
Any language I like? The language I speak
Becomes mine, its distortions, its queerness
All mine, mine alone. It is half English, half
Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest,
It is as human as I am human, don't
You see? It voices my joys, my longings, my
Hopes, and it is useful to me as cawing
Is to crows or roaring to the lions, it
Is human speech, the speech of the mind that is
Here and not there, a mind that sees and hears and
Is aware. Not the deaf, blind speech
Of trees in storm or of monsoon clouds or of rain or the
Incoherent muttering of the blazing
Funeral pyre. I was child, and later they
told me I grew, for I became tall, my limbs
Swelled and one or two places sprouted hair when
I asked for love, not knowing what else to ask
For, he drew a youth of sixteen into the
Bedroom and closed the door. He did not beat me
But my sad woman-body felt so beaten.
The weight of my breasts and womb crushed me. I shrank
Pitifully. Then. . . I wore a shirt and my
Brother's trousers, cut my hair short and ignored
My womanliness. Dress in saris, be girl
Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be cook
Be a quarreller with servants. Fit in. Oh,
Belong, cried the categorizers. Don't sit
On walls or peep in through our lace-draped windows.
Be Amy, or be Kamala, or better
Still, be Madhavikutty. It is time to
Choose a name, a role. Don't play pretending games.
Don't play at schizophrenia or be a
Nympho. Don't cry embarrassingly loud when
Jilted in love. . . I met a man, loved him, call
Him not by any name, he is every man,
Who wants a woman, just as I am every
Woman who seeks love. In him. . . the hungry haste
Of rivers, in me. . . the oceans' tireless
Waiting. Who are you, I ask each and everyone,
The answer is, it is I. Anywhere and,
Everywhere, I see the one who calls himself
If in the world, he is tightly-packed like the
Sword in its sheath. It is I who drink lonely
Drinks at twelve, midnight, in hotels of strange towns,
It is I who laugh, it is I who make love
And then, feel shame, it is I who die dying
With a rattle in my throat. I am sinner,
I am saint. I am the beloved and the
Betrayed. I have no joys which are not yours, no
Aches which are not yours. I too call myself I.

KAMALA DAS was born in Malabar, India in 1934. She won PEN's Asian Poetry Prize in 1963. Her published work includes *Summer In Calcutta* (1965), *The Descendants* (1967) and *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems* (1973).

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REGION 6 TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS UNION

SPORT

CLAYTON GOODWIN

UNSULLIED INDIVIDUALITY

A PROFILE OF ABDUL QADIR

Abdul Qadir is a unique cricketer, a character of unsullied individuality in the stylized conduct of the contemporary game. As an unorthodox spin bowler, whose delivery is difficult to read, he has confused batsmen in the manner of Sonny Ramadhin and Jack Iverson. He has increased his psychological control the longer his international career has lasted and has never been mastered for any length of time. His ability, and his approach to the game, have contributed much to Pakistan's success and to the tilt in the balance of world competition.

Pessimists, who have predicted the terminal decline of slow bowling as the result of the general covering of pitches and the overwhelming emphasis on fast bowling (especially in the West Indies and in Australia), have been confounded. Similarly batsmen, whose experience of playing against top-class spin has been negligible, have found their limitations exposed mercilessly by his leg-spin, googlies and top-spin.

Abdul Qadir was born on 15 September 1955 at Lahore, one of the country's two principal and distinctive regions. The territory has been the birthplace of a number of outstanding and competitive sportsmen; none greater in popular acclaim than all-round cricketer, Imran Khan, the captain who has cultivated the leg-spinner's success.

On his Test Match debut against England in his home city in December 1977, Abdul Qadir achieved little of note. The fast bowler Bob Willis was his only victim, but in the first innings of the next match, he took 6 wickets for 44 runs. Nevertheless, unlike other 'mystery' bowlers who have attained immediate success and faded as batsmen have become acquainted with their wiles, the Pakistani did not command a regular Test team place until the middle of the present decade.

In those early days, the then bearded Abdul Qadir was as conspicuous by his hopping, loping approach in delivery and by his vociferous, beseeching appeals as by the merit of his bowling. That whole-hearted attitude remains with him. Any tendency by batsmen to treat him lightly has been fraught with danger, and, unlike a number of slow bowlers, he has been a match-winner abroad as well as at home.

His character is as distinctive as his style of playing. In interviews, Abdul Qadir has shown reverence for his religion, respect for his country and his captain, and so far he has resisted the temptation to exploit his talent as a professional overseas. A year ago he missed the early weeks of the tour to England in order to stay home and comfort his ailing wife.

That absence emphasised his value to the side. The Pakistani tourists played disappointingly against the counties in a wet and cold climate at the start of the season, with fumbled fielding, anaemic batting and lacklustre bowling. The weather did not improve but team performance did, once latecomers Abdul Qadir and Javed Miandad arrived.

The leg-spinner gave a superlative demonstration of his art in taking 9 wickets for 56 runs against England at Lahore in November 1987. It was the best innings analysis ever returned for his country. The batsmen hadn't the slightest clue of how to play him.

Abdul Qadir's batting, which has hardly troubled the scorers for much of his career, has blossomed only gradually. Recently, however, especially in the World Cup limited-overs competition and in the subsequent Test Match series against England, his confident straight-hitting, often to the boundary, has been invaluable.

Cricket is essentially a team game but, more than any other, such pursuit produces in each generation one or two performers whose characters rise above those of their colleagues and above their own achievements. It would not be possible to mistake Abdul Qadir in either ability, temperament or style.

CLAYTON GOODWIN is a writer and sports journalist. He is a regular contributor to the sports pages of the *Jamaican Weekly Gleaner*.

BOOKS

BOB STEWART

A COMMENDABLE ENDEAVOUR

India in the Caribbean
Edited by David Dabydeen and Brinsley Samaroo
Published by Hansib/University of Warwick 1987
Price: £8.95

In his article on East Indian women in the Caribbean, Jeremy Poyting laments that little previous historical research has been devoted to his topic. The lament could be extended to almost any of the issues raised in *India in the Caribbean*. It is a compilation by David Dabydeen and Brinsley Samaroo of research articles, poems, and short stories, and published in commemoration of the one-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of the importation of East Indian indentured labourers into the Caribbean. The book is a commendable endeavour. It fills in the details of the Indo-Caribbean experience that a few broader studies have only outlined.

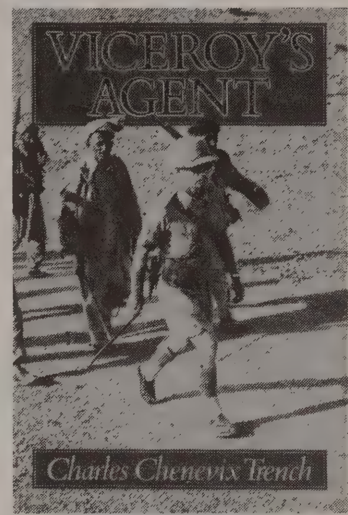
The book begins with Sam Selvon's humorous, moving, and sharp reminiscences and observations on Asian West Indian at home and in the British and North American big cities — for many of them, exiles twice over. This is followed by eleven research articles on themes such as indenturing, cultural connections with India, the resistance of Indian workers to methods of social and political control, aspects of the East Indian contribution to Caribbean society and economy, East Indians and calypso, Indo-Guyanese women poets, and Indo-Caribbean test cricketers. The book concludes with a sampling of the work of six Asian West Indian poets and story writers.

The research papers were selected from three conferences on Indo-Caribbean history held at the University of the West Indies between 1979 and 1984. There is a wealth of research that has been produced in the departments of social science, history, and English at UWI. Much of it gets published locally, in journals and occasional papers, but, unfortunately, they do not reach far outside the UWI community.

The problem of making readable working papers of seminars and conferences, however, has not been tackled sufficiently in the editing. For example, the impact of Ramesh Deosarran's fascinating topic, on the controversy surrounding Black Stalin's 1979 "Caribbean Man" calypso, is obscured by the academic scaffolding that remains in his paper. That an academic paper can be engagingly written is shown in Poyting's article, and in Birbalsingh's on Indo-Caribbean test cricketers. More revision could have been demanded of some of the other contributors.

One indication of the vitality of this book is that it leads to a multitude of related topics that could not be handled in a single anthology, even when compiled by experts like Dabydeen and Samaroo. One hopes that the two editors or their colleagues can find the time and energy to give us more.

A dominant conclusion emerges throughout the book. Even though the contact of East Indians and ex-slaves (a contact that neither group chose) was one of conflict, the histories of African and East Indian workers and peasants in the Caribbean are more convergent than antithetical. This is immediately evident in Samaroo's article comparing the abolishment of slavery and indenturing, and it resounds through the poems and stories that conclude the book. The final sentence of Frank Birbalsingh's article on Indo-Caribbean test cricketers can be used as a coda to *India in the Caribbean:* "Far from being divisive, this account asserts the Caribbeanness of players who have successfully broken out from the shared colonial oppression of slavery/indenture to express an impulse for freedom that is universal."



ANNA GRIMSHAW

RAJ HISTORY

Viceroy's Agent
by Charles Chenevix Trench
Published by Jonathan Cape 1987
Price: £16.00 hb

"The shortest service in the Political was that of Robert Kilkelly of the Poona Horse. It terminated when, as Personal Assistant to the Resident for Rajputana, he sent an official invitation to a Miss Hoare, and spelt the name wrong. It was, they said, the only kind he knew".

The unfortunate Kilkelly lacked the basic qualification required of a Political, social skill. The task of the Politicals was to oil the machinery of indirect rule, to ensure that the series of treaties made between the British and local rulers worked, and thereby upheld British influence over vast areas of the Empire.

Charles Trench has written a detailed study of the work of the Indian Political Service, 1919-1947. His book draws on a variety of sources: official records and documents, personal accounts and his own valuable first hand knowledge of the Service.

The Politicals were an elite corps of men, carefully recruited from the Indian Army and Indian Civil Service. Few Indians were admitted as they were rarely accepe some delightful painting has been produced. This would have brought him much closer, at least in painting, to his desired goal.

Merali terms his works "batik painting," for he departs considerably from the traditional method of dipping the textiles in dye, using brushes on cotton or silk just like a painter to pleasing effect. He employs warm, resonant colours quite evocative of India and has an eye for character when portraying people whom he views with great sympathy and respect.

In a work titled *From Rajula to Dar-es-Salaam* he shows us a group portrait of his family. Clearly it was done from a photograph after their migration from Gujarat to Tanzania in 1947 and he uses an appropriately faded monochrome tone to indicate that this happened long ago, in an almost mythical past. Elsewhere he turns to much stronger, almost poster-like, images with written messages, protesting social injustice.

In such works as *Unilever Strike, Anti-social Forestry* or *Eighty Exploitation Flavour Tea Bags* he demonstrates his mettle, castigating the multi-nationals, the destruction of natural environment and exploitation of sweated labour in the fields and factories. He contrasts this with a set of black and white photographs in which he focuses on street-spinners, architecture *(ghat)* on a river's bank and a holy man with Rasta-like locks. India, judging from this exhibition, is in desperate need of modernisation.

The focus of *Viceroy's Agents* is narrow. It deals almost exclusively with the connection between the British and the Indian Princes. As the book progresses, however, the author has to consider issues of Independence and the relationship between the indigenous rulers and the growing nationalist movement. Trench does not spend much time on such questions. The ease with which the Princes were pushed aside by the Congress politicians with popular support, cannot be understood in the absence of a broad examination of India's political development or detailed analysis of the bond between the Princes and their subjects.

These lie beyond the scope of Trench's book. Nevertheless *Viceroy's Agents* remains a valuable study of a neglected aspect of Raj history.

ANNA GRIMSHAW was born in Lancashire. She studied anthropology and later worked as a researcher for Granada Television. She is currently assistant to CLR James.

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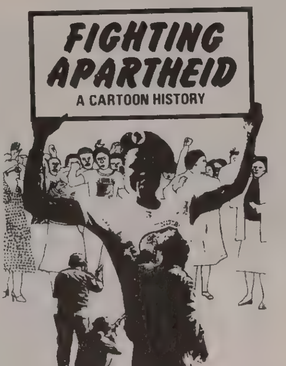

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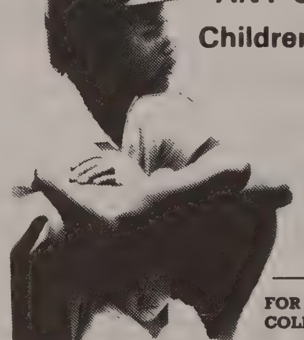

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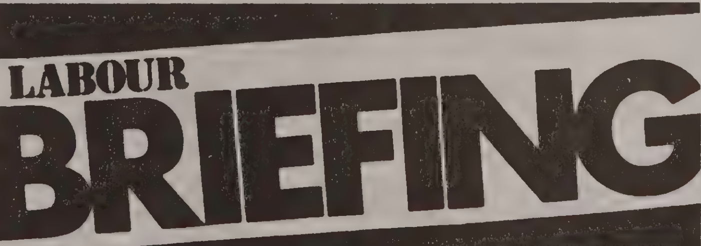

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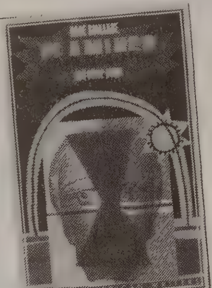

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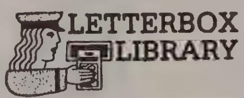

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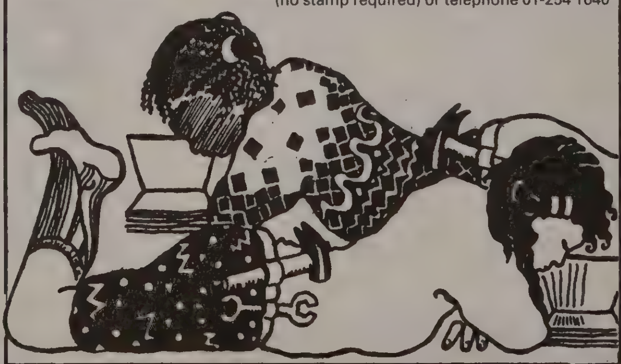
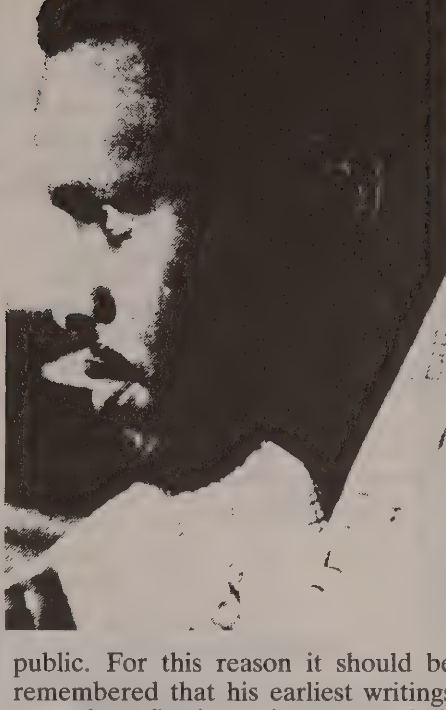


DONALD WOOD

A VOICE OF FREEDOM

I Write What I Like
by Steve Biko
Published by Heinemann
Price: £3.95



This selection of Steve Biko's writing, edited by his friend Father Aelred Stubbs CR, is a welcome volume in paperback from Heinemann. It includes a number of columns Biko wrote, under the pseudonym Frank Talk, for the monthly newsletter of the South African Students Organisation. It also contains a selection of letters and papers relating to aspects of the Black Consciousness Movement of which he was one of its founders and leading members in South Africa.

Father Stubbs knew Biko from the time he was a teenager and was regarded by him as mentor as well as friend. He was one of several members of the Anglican order of the Community of the Resurrection, such as Archbishop Trevor Huddleston, who played a key role in the support of black South Africans resisting apartheid. At the time of Steve Biko's death, Father Stubbs was living in Lesotho under prohibition from entering South Africa, and it was there that he began to compile this anthology.

Through these articles, in his own words, Biko gives a vivid picture of the thoughts and emotions which gave rise to Black Consciousness and which gained for him a pre-eminence among young blacks. This he constantly sought to diffuse and re-direct into a less personal, but broader, support for the collective leadership of the movement.

In almost all that survives of Biko's writing, speech or testimony, his power of intellect is clearly evident. It is one of the great tragedies of South Africa that the expression, the flowering of this intellect, was hampered from early 1973 by the imposition of a govermental banning decree prohibiting him from writing, travelling or speaking in public. For this reason it should be remembered that his earliest writings were the reflections of a young mind, exploring and expounding. It would be neither fair nor appropriate to regard every word he wrote in his early twenties as necessarily an exact reflection of his thought in his later years.

All who knew him realised that his was a uniquely developmental intellect. This was why he seemed to grow in stature with every passing year until the final tragedy of his death in September 1977.

Yet while it is possible, and even probable, that in the course of his own development to maturity, Biko might have rephrased or reformulated some of his earlier expressions of opinion, it is hard to imagine that the central theme and the cutting edge of his philosophy would have been substantially different from that reflected in *I Write What I Like* or in the other selections in this volume.

This is what makes the book so valuable. In his own words, he explains the core of his political approach and the reasons he set out on the political road, leading to a destination he knew well could be his untimely death. That he understood the full implications of this course is made clear at the end of this book, in the chapter "On Death". Here he tells his hypothetical captors: ". . .If you allow me to respond, I'm certainly going to respond. And I'm afraid you may have to kill me in the process even if it's not your intention."

DONALD WOODS is a South African writer and journalist, now exiled in Britain. He was an associate of Steve Biko and is a subject of the film, *Cry Freedom*.

TREVOR ESWARD

THE MACHINERY OF DOMINATION

South Africa: Time of Agony, Time of Destiny — The Upsurge of Popular Protest
by Martin Murray
Published by Verso
Price: £9.95

South Africa Inc.
The Oppenheimer Empire
by David Pallister, Sarah Stewart and Ian Lepper,
Published by Simon & Schuster
Price: £12.95

In his book, Martin Murray, Associate Professor of Sociology at the State University of New York, has produced a history of the last ten years of black struggle in South Africa. His main thesis is:

> The key ingredient in the growth of black working-class militancy was the formation of black trade unions that focused their organisation and struggle on the workplace. This maturation of shop-floor militancy was paralleled by the development of a huge mass movement in the townships and in the schools.

The book begins with a lengthy analysis of the politics of the white minority government. He argues that, by trying to divide an elite of urban black "insiders" from the mass of rural black "outsiders", the Botha regime's central purpose is "the creation of a durable black middle class committed to the ideals of free enterprise". This would serve to consolidate and strengthen the apartheid machinery of domination.

The second part of the book examines recent developments in the black trade union movement. Here, Murray gives brief accounts of the history and ideological positions of the main black trade union confederations and recounts some of the forms and tactics of workplace struggle. Finally, the book examines in detail the various manifestations of popular struggle — rent strikes, consumer boycotts, student strikes, demonstrations, rallies, attacks on local government buildings, the growth of the "comrades" movement, and the response of the Botha regime to these developments which culminated in its declaration of a state of emergency.

Murray has set himself an important and necessary task. The detailed documentation of the struggles of oppressed people is an essential part of that struggle. I believe, however, this is best done by the participants themselves, rather than by an academic outsider, and it is here that there is the

greatest problem with the book. There are 50 pages of "Notes" at the end of the text, indicating Murray's sources for the information he provides. It seems to me that by far the largest sources were newspaper and magazine articles (many of them US or UK publications) and this was particularly noticeable in the sections on popular rebellion. The voices of the participants only appear when filtered through the mechanism of newspaper quotations and Murray does not state how he tested the accuracy of the reports he relied on for his information.

It is this dependence on journalistic sources which suggests why the book is so difficult to read. Its style is full of the cliches of journalism, occasionally seasoned with marxist or sociological jargon. As a 400 page magazine article, the book is a tour de force; as a history of recent black struggle in South Africa it is useful, but has serious shortcomings.

South Africa Inc. The Oppenheimer Empire is a very different book from Martin Murray's. It is much shorter, has a livelier style, and provides a history of the Oppenheimer family and their South African financial empire. It concentrates on the financial and political wheeling and dealing of the Oppenheimer's Anglo American Corporation and de Beers Consolidated Mines. It aims to demonstrate that the Oppenheimer family's public reputation as opponents of apartheid is undeserved. The book combines family history with details of corporate tax evasion and sanctions-busting, accounts of Oppenheimer control of the world gold and diamond markets (including trade with the Soviet Union) and descriptions of life and working conditions in Anglo mines and factories. Detail of the latter, for me, is the most effective part of the book because the reality of life under apartheid contrasts with the world of corporate affluence presented in the rest of the text.

Writing the history of current events is always difficult because one is denied the benefit of hindsight, but in such circumstances the political historian should at least indicate what she or he thinks are the likely logical developments of the story being recounted. Both this book and Murray's book recognise that South African capitalism and apartheid are inextricably intertwined. Thus to someone looking at South Africa from the outside, the inevitable conclusion is that black South Africans will only liberate themselves by overthrowing both the apartheid regime and capitalist domination. Yet the authors of *South Africa Inc.* seem to suggest, although they recognise its risks as a political strategy, that capital could still play some kind of "progressive" role in South Africa. They conclude:

> "Though by the end of 1986 the talk was only of inevitable bloodletting, it may still be possible to achieve a peaceful transition to majority rule. Doing so would involve huge risks for Anglo's management. It would mean pushing the government so hard towards a just settlement as to risk severe retaliation — from the shareholders, from the military and from the Afrikaner Right and with only the fickle support of the US Congress to rely on. And the worst risk of all is that, after transition, the business may be taken over, lock, stock and barrel, by the new government."

The story told in the book's previous 200 pages argues against such a conclusion. Martin Murray appears to take a different view. His final sentence is:

> "Yet the profound experience of pitched and bloody confrontations between increasingly polarized antagonists seems to have convinced growing numbers on both sides that a military test of strength and wills is both an unavoidable and inevitable outcome of the continuing political unrest."

ANDREW SALKEY

THIRD WORLD BARD

Child of the Sun and Other Poems
by Cecil Rajendra
Published by Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications, 1986
Price: £3.95

Dove on Fire: Poems on Peace, Justice and Ecology
by Cecil Rajendra
Published by WCC Publications
The Risk Book Series, Geneva, Switzerland, 1987
Price £3.60

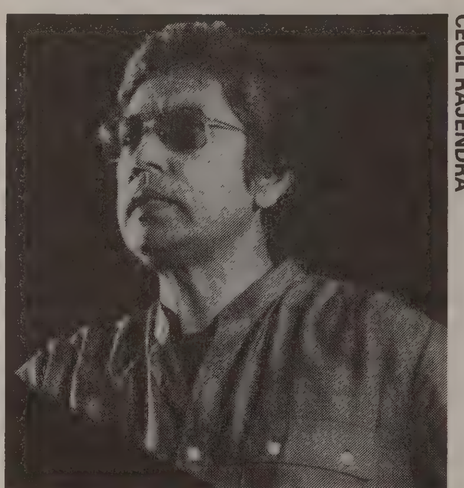
The political poetry of Cecil Rajendra has the fierce tenderness we associate with the excoriating, yet compassionate, work of Pablo Neruda and Nicolas Guillen. Further, it is no wonder that Rajendra's epigraph to *Child of the Sun and other Poems* cites the quotation from Albert Camus's exemplary dictum concerning the duty of all writers. It declares, in part: ". . .to bear witness and shout aloud, every time it is possible, in so far as our talent allows, for those who are enslaved as we are." Rajendra certainly does so, with clear-sightedness and with a direct, spiky poetic diction.

In this volume, he takes a galaxy-eyed view of our earthy national boundaries and mindless warring, and regrets:

> *". . .still we're asked/to thump our chest/ trumpet our nationality."*

A deeply committed humanist-pluralist, he is profoundly concerned about injustice, pain and disconsolation, everywhere:

> *"i am a city of shanty/ towns, blood & chancre/ i am Kingston & Brasilia/ Bangkok, Montevideo/*


CECIL RAJENDRA

> *Manila, Dhaka, Rio/ Calcutta & Jakarta/ Hanoi & Addis Ababa/ i am Santiago."*

And yet, in the same poem, Rajendra turns a joyful, celebratory eye on the universalist pride he feels and enjoys as his right in the pleasures of our Third World cultures:

> *"But if i am thunder/ i am a rainbow/ of song & dance also:/ sitar, tabla, raga,/ guitar, conga, samba,/ reggae, ramvong, calypso -/ i am mas & carnival/ a circle of laughter/ a wild bacchanal/ of rum & coconut water."*

A similar pride and joy in, and a concentrated concern for, the vast majority of the world's humiliated and ignored show through, cogently and resonantly, in the elegies, ironic and satiric narratives and love lyrics of *Dove on Fire: Poems on Peace, Justice and Ecology*, a selected compilation from four earlier books.

May Cecil Rajendra continue to bear witness and evoke aloud on our behalf!

ANDREW SALKEY is a Jamaican writer and critic who has lived in Britain. He is currently professor of Creative Writing at Hampshire College, USA.

BOB STEWART

HISTORY PERSONIFIED

X/Self
by Edward Kamau Brathwaite
Published by Oxford University Press, 1987
Price: £6.95

A mythic narrative underlies *X/Self,* Brathwaite's most recent book of poems. It completes the trilogy of *Mother Poem* and *Sun Poem.* An ancient empire declines, and out of a tumultuous millennium arises a Europe casting an imperial eclipse over Asia, Africa, and the Americas: "Rome burns/and our slavery begins." Images of Europe's overshadowing appear throughout the book, signifying, as in the poem "Salt," the convergence of Western glory and the spread of human slavery. One of the most potent of these images is in "Mont Blanc": as the alpine mountain rises, "chad sinks/sa/hara wakes out slowly." Geological and climatic changes become symbols of imperialism and enslavement, as "the dry snake of the harmattan" coils around and constricts the destiny of Africa.

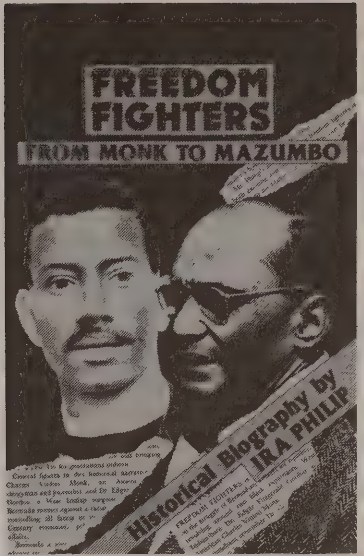
Countering the traditional heroes of Western expansion and conquest (Columbus, Cortez, Hawkins etc.) is Brathwaite's polymorphous X/Self. X/Self is never one hero, one great man, but is a personalized force that passes through subjection, slavery, resistance, rebellion, and, finally, judgement and historical redemption. The symbol of X/Self provokes several interrelated interpretations. X names the historically submerged personality. It also signifies the self-liberated captive; he is x/plosion and rebellion. Tupac Amaru, Makandal, Nanny, and Marti are some of the many manifestations of X/Self named in the poems. X is also suggestive of *Krystos,* the first letter in the Greek spelling of which is X (chi) — not Constantine's triumphant and imperial Lord, but the Christ who proclaimed himself the liberator of captives. In the end, X is "Xango" (Shango), the African and West Indian god of lightning and thunder, who absorbs each of the personalities of X in the final poem of the book: "he will shatter outwards to your light and calm and history/your thunder has come home."

X/Self is challenging reading. The range of geographical, cultural, and historical allusion in these poems is encyclopaedic. Historical time in *X/Self* is not linear; centuries twist, spiral, converge, implode. But that is the point Brathwaite is making: that the long history of unresolved human oppression and rebellion is as immediate as the breath and blood of today's living oppressors and rebels.

The voice of *X/Self* is unmistakenly West Indian. The "nation-language", as Brathwaite has called the Caribbean tongue and ear, grounds the entire book. More than simply creolized syntax and vocabulary, the nation-language is an authentic depository of experience and a vehicle of thought and wisdom. Thus, as in the poem "X/Self's Xth Letters from the Thirteen Provinces," the language that some still deprecate as "patois" carries its instinctive speaker to revelations that would be concealed in standard English.

Aspects of the imagery and ideas in *X/Self* can be obscure if one has not read carefully Brathwaite's antecedent writings. I suggest, however, that the reader avoid consulting the nineteen pages of notes at the end of the book until s/he has read all the poems. Let the uninterrupted impact of X/Self's voice be felt first. The explanations can come later.

FREEDOM FIGHTERS
(HISTORICAL BIOGRAPHY)
Ira Philip



234 x 156mm. 280pp
ISBN 0 947638 42 3 Cased £11.95
ISBN 0 947638 41 5 Paper £5.95

Ira Philip's FREEDOM FIGHTERS is a spellbinding example of the universal drama of entrenched power versus the irresistible urge for freedom. It profiles in the main, two brave individuals unable to ignore their passion for freedom, responding to intimidating injustice and bringing about a new day for generations unborn. It is a history that goes beyond Bermuda with its universal story of how the Black man has to fight against oppression. It is an exciting narrative on the struggle of Bermudian workers for equality, revolving around two black expatriates, West Indian-born Dr. Edgar Fitzgerald Gordon (MAZUMBO) and American Charles Vinton Monk. These two courageous men led the masses of Bermuda against a racist oligarchy known as the "Forty Thieves", bent on controlling all facets of the Island's twentieth century economic, political and ecclesiastical affairs.

Bermuda, a mere dot on the world map, has always assumed an international significance out of proportion to its size. It is Britains oldest self-governing colony, a strategic military base and tourist resort situated in the Atlantic 600 miles off the Carolina coast and approximately 1,000 miles north of the nearest Caribbean island. Its population dynamics have always distinguished it from all other British colonial territories excepting South Africa, with its predominantly black majority and its significantly large white minority.

For centuries Bermuda has been noted for its affluence. The wealth of the country, however, was compressed in the hands of a few white landowners. They were the oligarchy, the first familes labelled by Dr. Gordon as The Forty Thieves, powerful and feared. They held the black masses and poor whites in virtual economic thralldom until Dr. Gordon succeeded in organised labour. FREEDOM FIGHTERS examines the path towards democratic institutions and the enduring power of oligarchi instincts and entrenched privilege in one of the world's richest countries, Bermuda.

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RAZIA IQBAL

UNFULFILLED PROMISES

A Wicked Old Woman
by Ravinder Randhawa
Price: £4.95

Yatra: The Journey
by Nina Sibal:
Published by Women's Press, 1987
Price: £5.95

Kulwant, the "wicked old women" of Ravinder Randhawa's novel, is not wicked at all. She is given the title on a couple of occasions by her friend Caroline and becomes wicked because of this, and not for any cruel act she may have committed.

This first novel is a very ambitious one. It attempts to speak on behalf of many, and to cover a broad canvas of Asian life in Britain. It is a frustrating book, however, since it does not manage to do either particularly well. The ideas and emotions which Randhawa's characters convey are worth exploring, but they are hindered by the first-draft quality of the novel. *A Wicked Old Woman* is both hurried and unrefined.

There is Kuli, a teenager, going to her first party, falling in love with a white boy, forced in the space of two or three lines, to decide between one way of thinking and another. There is the older Kuli, married and a member of the Labour Party. There is the Kuli at odds with her children; one is professional, the other is not. There is Kuli, whom we do not really get to know because she hides behind one label after another, signifying one ideology at war with another. She is never a full, real, credible character.

All of Randhawa's characters are like that. They emerge through the unsuccessful device of disguise — Kuli disguising herself in Oxfam clothing and stumbling across them. We meet the mother who won't open her eyes until her daughter returns home, who stumbles in and out of a refuge for Asian women, the Punjabi punk, the trade union activist, the educated Asian woman who sells stories to the "white media trash", and so it goes on.

The male characters receive a worse deal, being only partially drawn as opposed to being invisible.

There *is* wit though, and it often comes through in throwaway lines. A particular character may speak and cleverly knock a stereotype on its head, but the characters as a whole do not embody traits which challenge prevailing cliches. Maya, despondent after a failed affair, says in her mood of self-pity: 'Is there time to backtrack? Pick someone from the DEAD bunch: the Doctor-Engineer-Accountant-Dentist.'

Ms Randhawa's style is easy to read, but what is read is easily forgettable. This is a pity because the outline of the characters and story could have developed into a fuller picture.

Nina Sibal's *Yatra* fares slightly better in the league of first novel comparisons. Submitted ambitiously as a Booker Prize entry (but not shortlisted), there are flashes of insight. For example, Krishna's changing complexion is a symbol for personal and national change, but it mysteriously fades into oblivion. In its place, Sibal is caught in the trap of telling the story through tales of Krishna's ancestors. Although these are important in the "journey" Krishna is to make, if she is to understand herself and her country's turbulent history, these tales are often the most turgid sections in the book.

Three-quarters of the way into *Yatra,* we learn that Krishna is a latter-day Green. She sets out to save the threatened forests through which she is making her *padyatra,* or pilgrimage. This will eventually allow her to know herself and her country. It is difficult to see this as a natural progression in the novel. For the reader, there are so many changes of direction that indifference soon sets in.

Krishna, named after the beautiful and dark Lord Krishna, is an attractive character, but she is submerged beneath a weak storyline. The dry, dull parts of the novel are worth enduring for the moving and poignant love story of Satinder and Poonam, two of Krishna's ancestors.

RAZIA IQBAL is a freelance journalist with special interest in the arts. She studied journalism at University College, Cardiff.

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AHMAD FARAZ

Crucifixion of the Word

Come, let us mourn
the bloodied corpse of that Jesus
whom we crucified,
and weep.
We have done our duty well;
it is time to settle accounts.

Let him take the slippers
who made the cross;
the shroud belongs to he
who nailed him;
and he deserves the crown of thorns
whose eyes had tears.

Come, let us claim now
we are all Christ;
let us also show them
we can wake the dead!
But his word was everything:
Where is the word?

AHMAD FARAZ

Don't Think

And she
pouring red wine into my glass,
said Don't think so much!
You're in a place now — in this country
in this city — where you can enjoy yourself,
where everyone is dancing, singing, swinging.
Stop thinking, relax!
What sort of people are you?
Even when you go abroad
you bring your sickly night and day,
your broken heart, your memories of friends,
like your soiled torn shirts
whose stains cannot be cleaned
by the machines of laundries —
these scars of poverty,
this self-destructive darkness of the soul
this self-neglect, you carry them
as if they were dear to you!
But here where you are now,
life is no dream,
nor a whirlpool of thought;
life here is like wine — daring, seductive,
not a poison.
Leave your begging-bowl at the doorstep,
begging is not the done thing here,
relax,
don't think so much!

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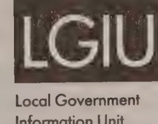

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CARYL PHILLIPS

RASTA SOCIOLOGY

O Babylon!
by Derek Walcott and Galt MacDermot
Talawa Theatre Production
Riverside Studios
4 February to 12 March 1988

'Talawa' is an old Jamaican word: it means strong and tough. Talawa Theatre company's third production confirms it as the most exciting and adventurous of the black theatre companies working in Britain at present. Having tackled the work of CLR James and Dennis Scott, they turn now to Derek Walcott and Galt MacDermot's huge musical, *O Babylon*!

The play deals with the life of a small Rastafarian community squatting in a part of Kingston harbour. Their God, the Ethopian Emperor Haile Selassie, is about to pay his second visit to Jamaica. The year is 1966. However, the community is under pressure from a group of real estate developers (the New Zion Company) who want to 'nice up' the whole area. The Rasta community is not prepared to leave without a struggle for its rights, and certainly not before seeing the chosen one.

The action moves from the 'religious' community to the 'secular' alleys and clubs of Babylonian West Kingston. Our lead character, a hot-head from the 'outside' world, moves to the 'inside' of the community and becomes Ras Aaron. His spiritual oscillation, and that of his girlfriend, Priscilla, provide the microcosm which mirrors the larger sociological pendulum that swings back and forth throughout the production.

The range of characters presented to us extends from the corrupt politician to the lovable and lascivious old woman, the rude-boy to the plump but athletic female nightclub singer. It is a tribute to Walcott's pen that we are able to recognise them as indomitably Caribbean in spirit and tone, and they never topple over into stereotype. Similarly, Galt MacDermot's music moves easily from soca to reggae to soul; he even throws in a rock n' roll number. The man who wrote *Hair*!, the great 'peace' musical of the sixties with its underlying rallying call to non-violent rebellion, is an inspired choice as composer. Unfortunately, too much of the music was badly amplified, and too many of the cast were poor singers to do his compositions full justice.

In fact, the musical side of the production seemed loosely wedded to the prosodic, something that became physically apparent when the actors were forced to punctuate speeches by reaching into pockets for their microphones before bursting forth into song. This was not only distracting, but dramatically clumsy. Surely it would have been worthwhile trying to radio-mike at least the principal characters?

The production boasted a fine set (Ellen Cairns); upstage a white silk tent rippled gently above the sand, while downstage the Babylonian corrugated iron of the neon-lit Club Number One dominated the eye. There were a number of fine performers, particularly from Roger Griffiths as Rude Boy and Malcolm Connell as Rufus/Aaron. Yvonne Brewster has taken on a formidable task in mounting a play of this complexity. She deserves much credit for a production which, if it occasionally veers off-course in the maintenence of musical credibility and dramatic tension, one suspects is more to do with the logistics of time and money than any innate deficiencies in vision or company spirit.

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ANJAYNA PATEL

A CRISIS OF IDENTITY

BBC television's *Network East,* a weekly programme for second generation British Asians, recently completed its first series.

Each programme was a mixture of current affairs, art and light entertainment. In forty-five minutes it tried to be *Newsnight, Club Mix* and *Wogan* rolled into one — without the expertise and budgets these programmes have. As a result *Network East* has, so far, failed to find its own identity and style.

The series has been weak in its coverage of current affairs. Rather than using film reports to give a clear and wider analysis of a story, studio interviews were constantly used. While this may have been the result of financial constraints, it made for boring and unstimulating television. The two presenters Valerie Vaz and Samantha Meah, without journalistic or television experience, often failed to elicit the most vital information from their interviewees. Both the presenters appeared uncomfortable on-screen, making the programme embarrassing to watch at times.

Their coverage of the Asian subcontinent was disappointing. Frequently, news footage already used on mainstream television was shown with a new commentary, but it did not particularly give new information or insight into the story.

On one occasion, when reporting on the troubles in Sri Lanka, they interviewed a university professor who had already appeared on BBC News. Why did they not talk to any Tamils and Sri Lankans? Why regurgitate what had already been shown? Throughout the series there was a tendency to talk to experts, rather than to the people or groups involved in the issues.

Network East was much more successful in its light, offbeat stories. Also it was the only programme on British television to give much needed space to British Asian music.

The magazine format is currently unique to black programming in the BBC ie. to *Network East* and *Ebony*. While it is undoubtedly true that *Network East* faced a difficult task, the programme needed to develop its own style and to make itself distinct from mainstream television, both in content and form.

ANJAYNA PATEL was born in Kenya. She is a journalist currently working as a researcher for Channel Four's *Bandung File.*

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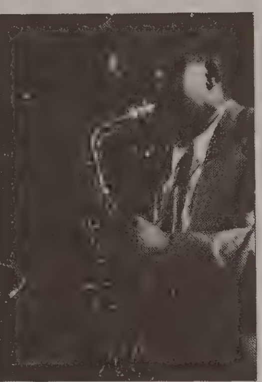

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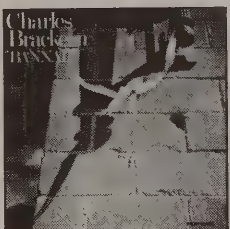

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SHAHEEN MERALI WORKSHOP IN JAMAICA

ANDREW HOPE

IN SEARCH OF ROOTS

Shaheen Merali Art Exhibition

In the catalogue to the current exhibition of batik works by Shaheen Merali, mounted at the Creative Arts Centre, UWI, Mona, there is an introduction by Nadir Tharani. Here he says that: "Batik, a resist-dye process used on cloth whose origins lie in Gujarat on the West Coast of India, seemed to be the most suitable, and he (Merali) has worked with this medium for the last four years."

Indeed, Merali, searching for his roots — a highly fashionable occupation — turned eventually to the traditional batik method for inspiration. He is of Indian parentage, but was born in Tanzania in 1959. His return to tradition occurred after he had studied sculpture at the Gwent College in Wales and became dissatisfied with his tutors. Then journeyed to his ethnic motherland to study its arts and crafts which led to the discovery of batik.

But can one say that this search for roots was successful when one considers the fact that batik did not originate in Gujarat, but in Java? The word batik means "painting" in Javanese. To turn to the East was a step in the right direction for Merali, but he could have more profitably turned to Mogul art, that is, to the Moslem courts of India where some delightful painting has been produced. This would have brought him much closer, at least in painting, to his desired goal.

Merali terms his works "batik painting," for he departs considerably from the traditional method of dipping the textiles in dye, using brushes on cotton or silk just like a painter to pleasing effect. He employs warm, resonant colours quite evocative of India and has an eye for character when portraying people whom he views with great sympathy and respect.

In a work titled *From Rajula to Dar-es-Salaam* he shows us a group portrait of his family. Clearly it was done from a photograph after their migration from Gujarat to Tanzania in 1947 and he uses an appropriately faded monochrome tone to indicate that this happened long ago, in an almost mythical past. Elsewhere he turns to much stronger, almost poster-like, images with written messages, protesting social injustice.

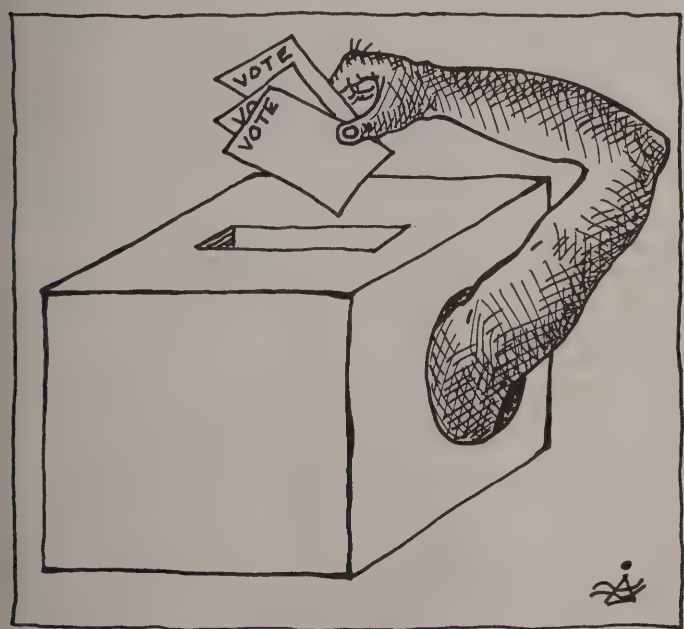
In such works as *Unilever Strike, Anti-social Forestry* or *Eighty Exploitation Flavour Tea Bags* he demonstrates his mettle, castigating the multi-nationals, the destruction of natural environment and exploitation of sweated labour in the fields and factories. He contrasts this with a set of black and white photographs in which he focuses on street-spinners, architecture *(ghat)* on a river's bank and a holy man with Rasta-like locks. India, judging from this exhibition, is in desperate need of modernisation.

ANDREW HOPE is an art critic for the *Jamaican Weekly Gleaner*. He resides in Jamaica.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN MARCH, SOUTHALL
CHILA BURMAN

CHILA KUMARI BURMAN was born in Liverpool of Punjabi parents. She studied at Leeds Polytechnic and later at the Slade School of Fine Art where she was awarded an MA.

LOOK MAMMA. . .MACHO! — RASHEED ARAEEN



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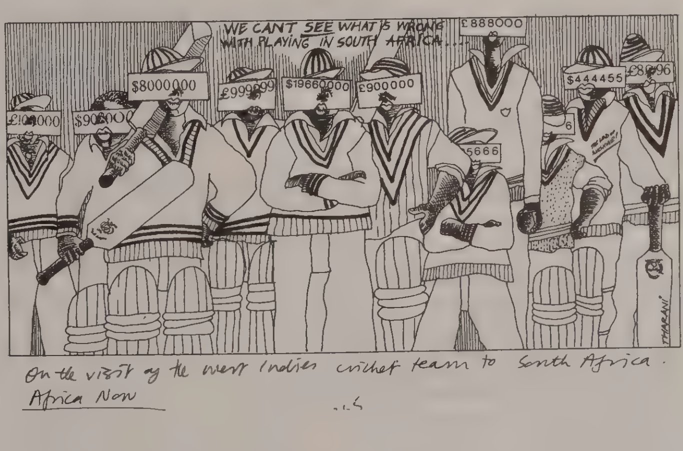


RASHEED ARAEEN was born in Karachi, Pakistan in 1935. He has lived in Britain since 1964. His paintings and sculptures have been widely exhibited in Britain.

NADIR THARANI was born in Moshi, Tanzania. He is an architect, painter and graphic designer. His cartoons and illustrations have appeared in several publications including *West Africa*, *New Africa* and *Forward*. He is currently joint editor of the arts magazine *Artrage*.

VAL WILMER

TENUOUS LINKS

Out of Many, One People
by The Jazz Warriors
(Antilles AN8712)

The Jazz Warriors, a band of dedicated and skilful young musicians at the heart of the current jazz 'boom', have been presented as a kind of phenomenon. Jazz music itself is no stranger to this response. It was excluded from much serious discussion by the use of that term ever since developing around the turn of the century, but it influenced everything with which it came into contact. But in the Warriors's case, the fact that they are all of African descent has both surprised and delighted British audiences unaccustomed to more than a handful of Black faces in the local arena. This fascination, while positive in terms of exposure, has hitherto operated against any thoughtful analysis of the place of these musicians in history.

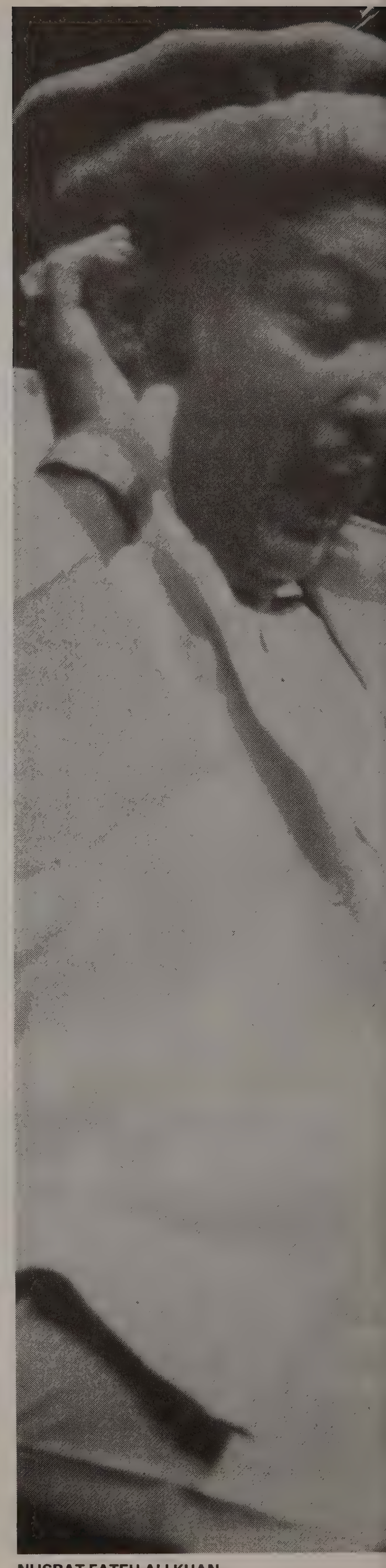
Five decades have passed since the brilliant Jamaican trumpeter Leslie Thompson rehearsed the mix of local Black instrumentalists and Caribbean settlers that became the Ken Johnson West Indian Dance Orchestra. That big band, according to contemporary reports, was one of the finest swing outfits this country has seen. But, were one to believe the jazz historians, they too were a phenomenon, springing from no visible tradition and influencing none in their wake. The scattering of sidemen in search of a living, following the leader's death in a 1941 air-raid, helped in the scornful relegation of the Afro-British to the sidelines — unless they happened to have the monumental talent of saxophonist Joe Harriott.

Now, with the emergence of the Warriors, those links with the past can be made. But, because their appearance is long overdue, there is pressure on them to deliver. And that, as their debut recording makes clear, is something of which they are not yet quite capable. A coherence, a solidity, is missing, and given the accomplished solos and high standard of musical excellence, this is a pity.

Like many other young players, they suffer from lack of exposure to the constant grounding which was the experience of those of an earlier generation developing alongside the music. Historical events in this country are partially responsible. The emphasis on rock music, soul and reggae, beginning in the 1960s, effectively banished jazz to esoterica for far too long. Even though those later influences, too, have their place, the Warriors' comparative inexperience has them failing to take off when you're itching for them to fly. Right now, only Cleveland Watkiss, the maverick singer, stands out as an original. Musicians like saxophonist Courtney Pine and trumpeters, Kevin Robinson and Claude Deppa, can go for it with the best of them. However, it's under the guidance of trumpeter Harry Beckett in his composition 'Many Pauses', that the Warriors show their mettle. Beckett, himself a member of an earlier generation, is, as ever, a delight.

The music will out in the end; that was why it was created in the first place, as an alternative to Western literary values. The Warriors, if they can survive fads and fashion, should be at the forefront in writing a version of their own. To criticise them for a situation not of their own making might appear churlish, but to stand back from the media hype that surrounds them creates welcome space. Such distance, it seems to me, can only help to clarify their role as bearers of a heavy tradition.

VAL WILMER is a writer and jazz critic. She writes for most of the major music magazines and is a regular contributor to *Wire*.



NUSRAT FATEH ALI KHAN

MAHMOOD JAMAL

SECULARIZED POP

QAWWALI at the Queen Elizabeth Hall

Qawwali is a form of music that developed around Sufi shrines dotted all over rural India and Pakistan. It is both a secular and religious form of entertainment and, for this reason, it has survived for centuries as popular musical expression. The music itself is very rhythmic, the purpose being to arouse a state of abandon and ecstasy in the listener. Although it sounds contradictory to say so, it is also highly meditative. In spite of the changes brought about by twentieth century music, *qawwali* remains the most powerful form of live entertainment in much of the sub-continent. Public performances often attract thousands of enthusiasts and, as a result, it has been taken out of its religious context of the shrine and brought to a stage setting as a popular musical form.

Qawwali is not music that can be easily categorized as classical, folk or pop. Like reggae and jazz, it is an independent form. However it is characterized by a strong rhythm provided by tabla, dholak and clapping, supplemented by a chorus. The harmonium is also essential. Many qawwal singers have training in classical music but technical musical ability is not required of them. Indeed, some of the greatest *qawwals* have been those whose voices were flawed or unsuited to sophisticated classical music. *Qawwali* is not cerebral music to be listened to quietly, it is a music for the heart, the emotions and the soul. It is eclectic and improvised, in its language, philosophy and form.

Now, the bad news for those who do not know Indian languages is that the words are very important. Many of them are well known ones which have been sung for centuries. The singers improvise, both musically and poetically, to give them a stamp of originality. The quality of a good *qawwal* performer lies in his ability to manipulate language and rhythms in such a way as to express the emotion embodied in the words. This can vary from praise and devotion to a love that recognizes no boundaries and unites the lover with the beloved (God, the prophet, a Sufi saint or the universe). Those of us who cannot understand the words can still feel the emotion, akin to listening to Bob Marley without understanding the lyrics. The listener is expected to participate, encourage and show his appreciation of the singer by swaying, shouting praise and, ultimately, by dancing in front of him.

The uninitiated got a chance in February to sample this music at the Queen Elizabeth Hall. The singers in this instance were Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and party who performed their own distinctive brand of *qawwali* to an appreciative capacity audience. Nusrat Fateh Ali was obviously limited by the presence of a mixed audience and I did not find his performance very exhilarating, though it was technically accomplished. He over-emphasized the musical aspects and often drifted into *ragas* to show his sophistication. This I found tedious and unnecessary. He is not the best exponent of *qawwali,* nonetheless he was good in adapting to the wider audience. He sang numbers where a single word or a line was repeated for its rhythmic effect, but although he created a musical response, he failed to create a strong emotional reaction among the listeners. Nusrat Fateh Ali has gained prominence in Britain. It is to his credit that he has adapted well. I would suggest that new listeners experience *qawwals* like Ghulam Farid Sabri, Aziz Mian and Bahauddin in order to make a proper comparison. What was good about this event was that it took place in the QEH and the music reached a cross-section of the public. For someone who has been a *qawwali* fan since he was a child, I welcome the fact that at last it has arrived on the British scene. Watch out for more!

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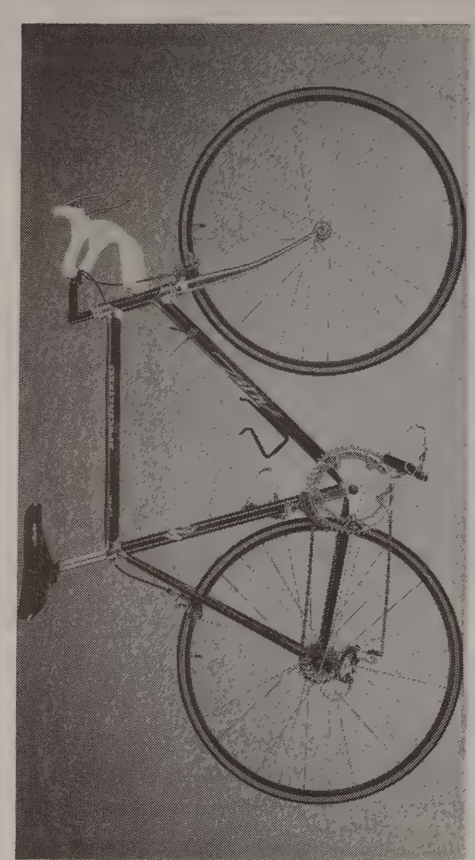

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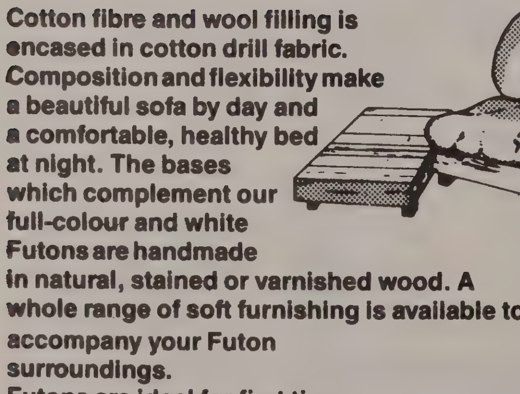

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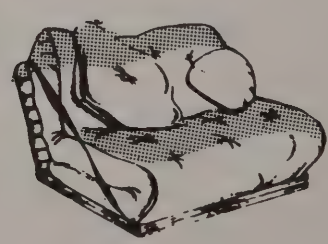

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NADIR THARANI

Against Poems

so I write about
armpits and sweat,
thighs and stones;
I indicate smells,
a mango,
convey the sound
that is with us every day;
I try to explain that
the earth is ours
and eyes can lie,
that the sun is yellow
and dust painful.
But tell me,
have you seen a word
break a rock?

NADIR THARANI

For Poems

words can't break stones
nor wash feet;
but then
how many stones or feet
can explain,
what our hands create
belongs to us.

NADIR THARANI was born in Moshi, Tanzania. He is an architect, painter and graphic designer. His cartoons and illustrations have appeared in several publications including *West Africa, New Africa* and *Forward.* He is currently joint editor of the arts magazine *Artrage.*

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Heaven of Freedom

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments
by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into
the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by Thee into ever-widening
thought and action—
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country
awake.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Separation

CLOUDS heap upon clouds and it darkens.
Ah, love, why dost thou let me wait out-side at the door
all alone?

In the busy moments of the noontide work I am with the
crowd, but on this dark lonely day it is only for thee that
I hope.

If thou showest me not thy face, if thou leavest me wholly
aside, I know not how I am to pass these long, rainy
hours.

I keep gazing on the far-away gloom of the sky, and my
heart wanders wailing with the restless wind.

(from *Gitanjli)*

RABINDRANATH TAGORE was born in 1861 and died in 1941. He is regarded as a pioneer of Indian literature in English. In 1913 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. His published poetry includes *Naivedya, Kheya* and *Gitanjali.*

AMARJIT CHANDAN

Years of Silence

They came
from Russia with love
To the land of Fucik
As one comes home
After a long wait.

They came
To sweep the shadows of death from the earth
People had nothing to present to them
Only tears, embraces and kisses.

They blossomed for them
Whose eyes' flowers were trampled
They shone for them
Whose eyes' stars were extinguished.

They came again
From Russia with love
To the land of Fucik
Their brains and hearts were buried
In the wall of Kremlin with state honours.

Now time was not the wheel of a chariot
But the chain of a tank
Which trampled and chewed the path underneath.

Sounds of frightened birds
Burning human torches
Falling trees asked:

What brought you here?
Who invited you?

A laugh echoed
As only the Czechoslavaks could laugh
Then in sorrow
Silence was observed for years to come

AMARJIT CHANDAN was born in Nairobi, Kenya in 1946. He is a poet, translator and journalist. A new collection of his poetry in translation *Awaiting The Monsoon* will be published soon by Lokamaya Press.

AMARJIT CHANDAN

Yesterday It Was the 27th September 1975

Yesterday it was the 27th September 1975
Yesterday when we were discussing small matters
punctuated by a little laughter
Maybe at the time
death dressed in military uniform
was waiting for them
in the prisons of Barcelona, Burgos, Madrid
And when all of a sudden we were silent
and the silence was to be broken the next moment
Maybe at the time
Their hearts stopped beating

Today it is the 28th September 1975
A bull is grazing in a faraway pasture
And there is news in the paper —
FIVE GUERILLAS DIE BEFORE A FIRING SQUAD
Holding my breath I read the news
Hearing the cries of Sanchez' mother and sister
With blurred eyes read aloud the names of the guerillas:
Juan Pardis Manot,
Angel Otagiao Ashveria,
Jose Humbarto Baena Alonso —
a student five years younger than me
Ramon Garcia Sanz —
a welder two years younger than me
Jose Louis Sanches Bravo Sólas —
a student eight years younger than me

I've kept the newspaper cutting
Many many years hence
When I read this news like an old letter
I'll be reminded again of
being together with you
laughing together with you
the blurred sight
Juan, Angel, Jose, Ramon, Jose. . .

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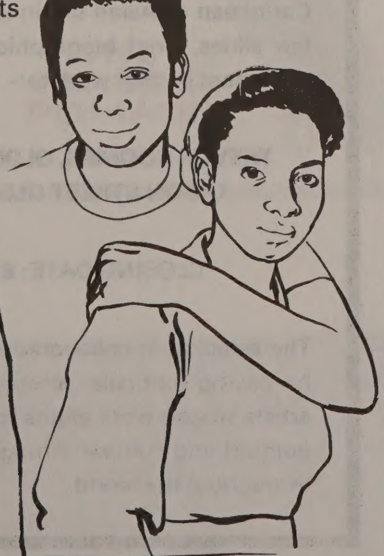

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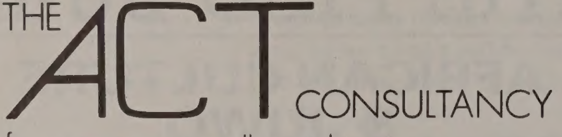

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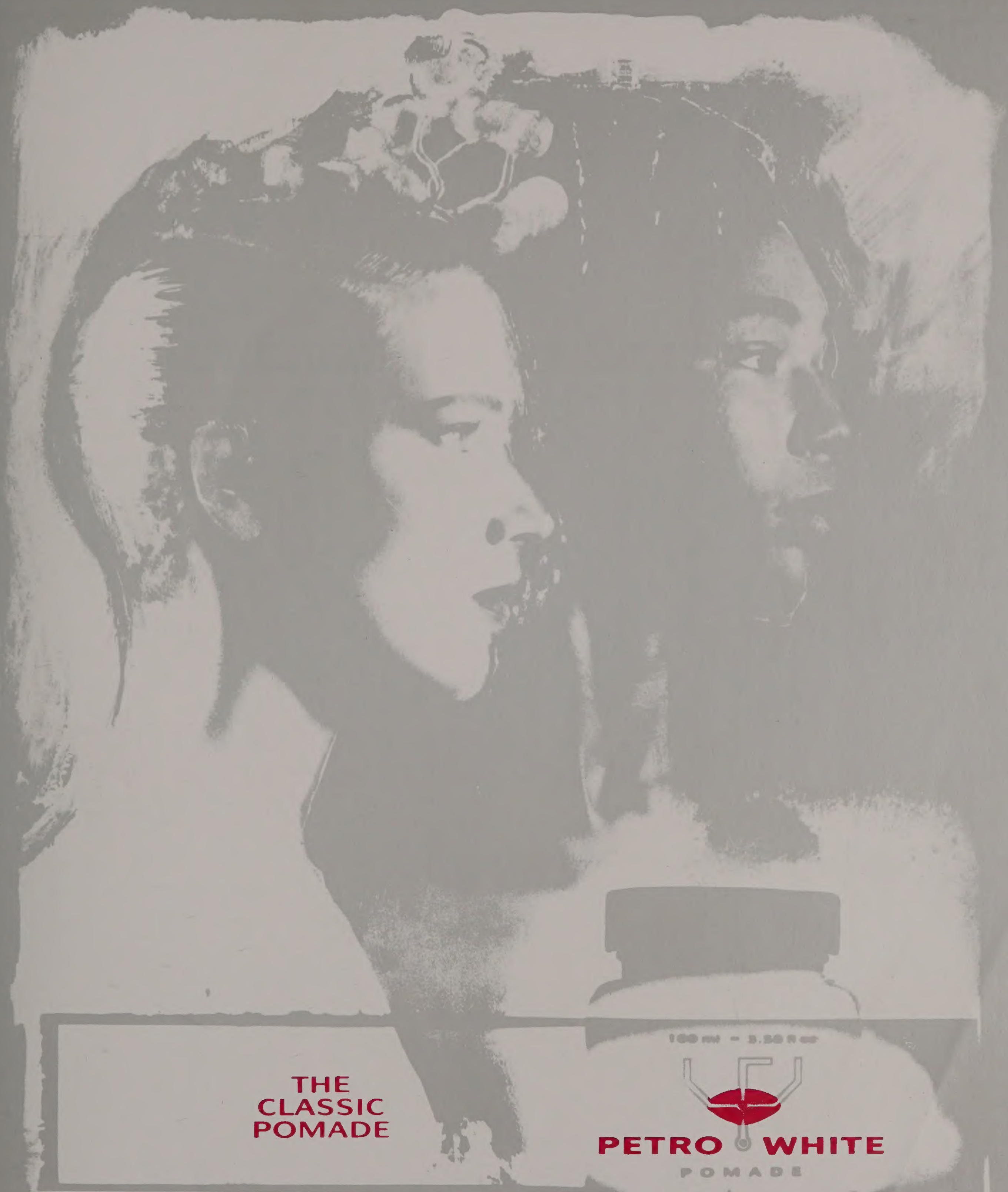
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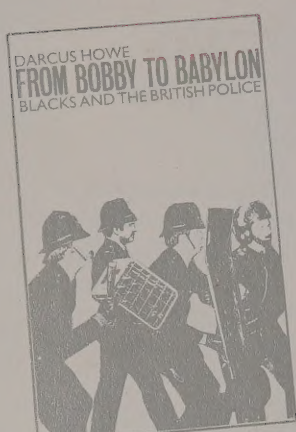

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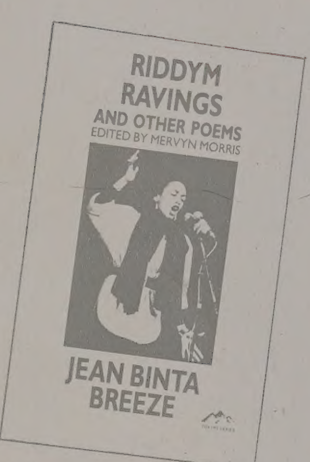

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